The pride of North Carolina's electric cooperatives

Volume 48, No. 3, March 2016

Carolina country

Carolina Country Gardens

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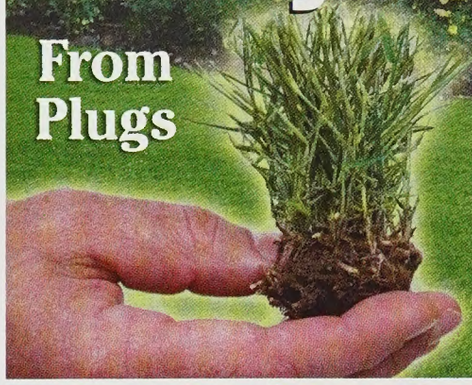
PERIODICAL

Spring herb festivals across the state—page 36

SAVE When You Grow A Zoysia Lawn From Plugs!



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ZOYSIA FARM NURSERIES
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GRASS SEED WILL *NEVER* GROW A LAWN LIKE THIS!

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To ensure best results, we ship you living genuine Amazoy Zoysia Grass, harvested direct from our farms. Super Plugs come precut, ready to plant. Freestyle Plugs are *not* cut. Before planting, cut sheets into minimum 1" square plugs or any size you want with shears or knife. Then follow the included easy instructions to plant plugs into small plug holes, up to a foot apart. Our guarantee and planting methods are your assurance of lawn success backed by more than 6 decades of specialized lawn experience!

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Meyer Zoysia Grass was perfected by the U.S. Gov't, released in cooperation with the U.S. Golf Association as a superior grass.

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When ordinary lawns brown up in summer heat and drought, your Zoysia lawn stays green and beautiful. The hotter it gets, the better it grows. *Zoysia thrives in blistering heat (120°)*, yet it won't winter-kill to 30° below zero. It only goes off its green color after killing frosts, but color returns with consistent spring warmth. Zoysia is the perfect choice for water restrictions and drought areas!

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New Amazoy Super Plugs Now Available Online!

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	750	150	6	$63.50	$16.00	40%
	1100	400	10	$87.50	$22.00	50%
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March 2016
Volume 48, No. 3

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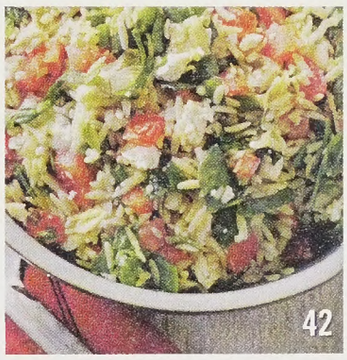

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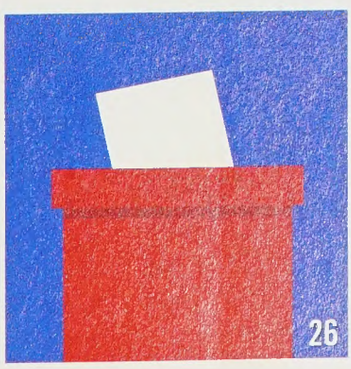
ON THE COVER

Both highbush (cover) and the more common rabbiteye blueberries grow throughout North Carolina. Learn more in our gardening guide which starts on page 13. (Photograph by Bill Cline, NCSU)



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North Carolina's electric cooperatives provide reliable, safe and affordable electric service to nearly 900,000 homes and businesses. The 26 electric cooperatives are each member-owned, not-for-profit and overseen by a board of directors elected by the membership.

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Your cooperative sends you Carolina Country as a convenient, economical way to share with its members information about services, director elections, meetings and management decisions. The magazine also carries legal notices that otherwise would be published in other media at greater cost.
Your co-op's board of directors authorizes a subscription to Carolina Country on behalf of the membership at a cost of less than $5 per year.

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Investing in our communities

By Carl W. Kornegay

Electric cooperatives are owned by the members they serve. That is a part of what makes us different from other utilities. Every day, we go to work with you, our members, as our focus.

Keeping the lights on. Keeping electricity affordable. Looking out for our members. These are things we do every day. But the cooperatives' mission is bigger than just providing affordable and reliable power: Our mission includes improving the communities we serve.

That is why I am calling your attention to the bond referendum on the statewide primary ballot. The Connect NC bond is a rare opportunity for major investments to improve the communities we serve.

On March 15, North Carolina's electric cooperative members will have an opportunity to vote for $2.1 billion in investments in education, parks, safety, agriculture, and water and sewer infrastructure. These investments under the Connect NC bond referendum will have a direct impact on our members and our rural communities and will do so with no tax increase.

Investments funded by the bond that will directly impact rural communities, include:

$350 MILLION
for projects at community colleges

$309.5 MILLION
for water and sewer loans and grants, with funds directed almost exclusively to rural communities

$179 MILLION
for agricultural labs and research facilities

$100 MILLION
for state parks

Among the other investments, funding to build Army National Guard facilities will keep our communities safe, and upgrades at North Carolina's universities and colleges will provide opportunities for the next generation.

The investments are just one side of the story. The other side is financial responsibility. No tax increase will be required to either finance or repay the bonds. North Carolina will maintain its position as one of a few states to hold the AAA bond rating.

In addition to providing investment in our communities with no tax increase, Connect NC helps further the cooperative mission. Community colleges support workforce development and train cooperatives' future employees and members. Agriculture research supports farming of the future to help power our state's number No. 1 industry: agriculture. Water and sewer investments ensure clean water for us and the next generation and bolster economic development efforts in rural communities.

For all of these reasons, I ask you to learn more about the Connect NC Bond referendum by visiting voteyestoinvest.com or connect.nc.gov.

Also, I ask you to learn more about the candidates on the ballot in the primary election. To help you, Carolina Country has included a special section about the primary election, NC Primary Election Guide, pages 26–27 or online at carolinacountry.com/vote.

North Carolina's 26 electric cooperatives are locally owned, locally operated, and guided by principles that put our members first. We are proud to be your source for power—and information. As our state continues to grow, you can depend on your cooperative to continue to lead on issues that will enhance the quality of life in our local communities.

Carl Kornegay is president of the board of directors at Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation in Dudley. He is currently serving as the president of the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives, Inc.

Solar panels

In the January issue ["Viewpoint"], Robert Helton lamented that new rules have resulted in the loss of cheap electricity from coal as well as the loss of jobs for coal miners. First, those rules are long overdue and are based on solid science. Further, cheap electricity from coal is an illusion because of the staggering hidden costs pushed onto society, including black lung disease, toxic and cancer causing chemical pollution of our air and water, and release of carbon dioxide (10 billion metric tons annually) contributing to global climate change. In 2014, Duke Energy spilled 70,000 tons of toxic coal ash turning the Dan River a menacing gray for 70 miles.

In contrast, solar panels produce pollution- and carbon dioxide-free electricity so long as the sun shines, which in North Carolina is a lot. After the upfront costs, power bills are cut substantially for decades with almost no effort or maintenance. Efficiency of solar panels has increased, while costs are down. Coupled with a 30% federal tax rebate, systems have become reasonably affordable. North Carolina had been a leader in solar with an additional 35% tax credit for homeowners, but that credit was eliminated in the current budget. A better way to produce electricity that is, in fact, cheap is for policies that help with upfront costs and encourage solar projects.

Producing your own electricity is very empowering, particularly when you are selling power back onto the grid. That is what the fossil fuel industry fears, but cooperative members should embrace. Of the 37,000 Wake Electric members, only 40 have solar panels on their homes — that is about to change.

Byron Butterworth, Wake Electric

Correction

We apologize for the confusion regarding the February 2016 Joyner's Corner puzzle, "How to change Mount Olive" [page 32]. The answer key on page 33 should have been printed as **MOUNT** UNTO TON TONE LONE LOVE **OLIVE**.

Chasing birds

My husband and I were visiting my daughter and her family in December 2015. What a blessing it was on that warm day to find that the red wing blackbirds were migrating through Ahoskie! It was quite a sight to see my 4-year-old grandson chase the thousands of birds in the cotton fields surrounding their home!

Karen Forehand Beikirch

Number 2916

INCORPORATED UNDER THE LAWS OF NORTH CAROLINA

CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP
IN
EDGECOMBE-MARTIN COUNTY ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION
TARBORO, N. C.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT Randolph B. Denson is a member of Edgecombe-Martin County Electric Membership Corporation.

This certificate is nonassessable, and, subject to the certificate of incorporation and the by-laws of the corporation as they are now or as they may be amended, is transferable only on the books of the corporation by a holder thereof in person or by attorney and only to a person eligible to membership under the certificate of incorporation and by-laws as they are now or as they may be amended.

This certificate is issued subject to, and any person becoming a member of the corporation shall be conclusively presumed to have accepted and become bound by, all the terms and conditions set out in the certificate of incorporation and in the by-laws of said corporation as they are now or as they may be amended.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said corporation has caused this Certificate to be signed by its duly authorized officers and to be sealed with the seal of the corporation.

This the 7 day of April, 1948.

EDGECOMBE-MARTIN COUNTY ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION

Attest: Secretary By President

Proud to be a member

This is a certificate of membership in Edgecombe-Martin County EMC, issued April 13, 1948, to Randolph "Randy" B. Denson. His daughter Kim Denson Jones sent it to us. She lives between Rocky Mount and Tarboro and is a member of the same co-op. She believes the certificate was for electric service at her father's service station known as Hillcrest Annex that he ran on old Hwy. 64. EMC-EMC was the state's first electric cooperative, formed in April 1936.

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Not getting the sleep you need?
Is your pillow the problem?

On its 10 year anniversary and with over five million satisfied customers, MyPillow® has been selected the *Official Pillow of the National Sleep Foundation!*

How Well Did You Sleep Last Night?

Did you toss and turn all night? Did you wake up with a sore neck, head ache, or was your arm asleep? Do you feel like you need a nap even though you slept for eight hours? Just like you, I would wake up in the morning with all of those problems and I couldn't figure out why. Like many people who have trouble getting a good night's sleep, my lack of sleep was affecting the quality of my life. I wanted to do something about my sleep problems, but nothing that I tried worked.

The Pillow Was the Problem

I bought every pillow on the market that promised to give me a better night's sleep. No matter how many pillows I used, I couldn't find one that worked and finally I decided to invent one myself. I began asking everyone I knew what qualities they'd like to see in their "perfect pillow", and got many responses: "I'd like a pillow that never goes flat", "I'd like my pillow to stay cool" and "I'd like a pillow that adjusts to me regardless of my sleep position." After hearing everyone had the same problems that I did, I spent the next two years of my life inventing MyPillow.

MyPillow® to the Rescue

Flash forward ten years and MyPillow, Mike Lindell's revolutionary pillow design, has helped 5 million people improve the quality of their sleep. MyPillow has received thousands of testimonials about the relief MyPillow has brought to people who suffered from migraines, snoring, fibromyalgia, neck pain and many other common issues.

Lindell has been featured on numerous talk shows, including *Fox Business News* and *Imus in the Morning*. Lindell and MyPillow have also appeared in feature stories in *The New York Times* and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. MyPillow has received the coveted "Q Star Award" for Product Concept of the Year from QVC, and has been selected as the Official Pillow of the National Sleep Foundation.

MyPillow's patented technology can help with all of the most common causes of sleep loss and allows you to adjust it to any sleeping position. You can even wash and dry MyPillow as easily as your favorite pair of blue jeans!

"Until I was diagnosed with various sleep issues, I had no idea why my sleep was so interrupted throughout the night. I watch Imus each morning and heard endless testimonials about MyPillow. I took his advice and ordered a MyPillow. Now I wake up rested and ready to conquer the day ahead. Thank you for helping me remember what it's like to sleep like a baby!"
- Jacqueline H.

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I do all of my own manufacturing in my home state of Minnesota and all materials are 100% made in the U.S.A. I'm so confident MyPillow will help you, I'm offering an unprecedented 60-day money back guarantee and a 10-year warranty not to go flat! I truly believe MyPillow is the best pillow in the world and that if everyone had one, they would get better sleep and the world would be a much happier place.

Michael J. Lindell
CEO, MyPillow, Inc.

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—Katharine, Shreveport, LA

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It's a bolt from the blue with the rare gemstone that took the jewelry world by storm.

Lightning struck the day they discovered Tanzanite. A bolt from the sky set the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro ablaze, revealing the sparkling violet-blue of Tanzanite below the surface. And this was no ordinary gemstone. Henry Platt, past president and chairman of Tiffany & Company called Tanzanite, "The most important gemstone discovery in over 2,000 years."

Lightning also struck the day you met her. Every star aligned to create the brilliant flash that lit up your heart and changed your life forever. With the *Lovestruck Tanzanite Ring* you can celebrate your own lucky lightning strike with the gemstone that took the jewelry business by storm. Nine tanzanite gemstones, weighing over two carats total. These violet-blue beauties are surrounded with 22 lab-created Diamond*Aura*® for a bonus flash of brilliance.

With over 4,000 sold, we currently have less than ~~2000~~ 1400 in stock!

You've been lucky enough for lightning to strike twice, but there will not be a third time. "Experts estimate that our tanzanite deposits will have run out in 30 years," says prominent mining company TanzaniteOne. With our industry contacts we've been able to secure a limited supply and offer the *Lovestruck Tanzanite Ring* for $97.50. But once the world's supply of tanzanite is gone, it's gone for good, and we'll all be left staring up at the sky, longing for another bolt from the blue.

"Tanzanite is one of the rarest gemstones on earth and one of the most undervalued relative to its rarity."

—The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania

Your satisfaction is 100% guaranteed. Experience the rare beauty of the *Lovestruck Tanzanite Ring* for two months. If it fails to create sparks simply send it back within 60 days for a complete refund of the sale price. We want you head over heels.

Special Offer: ***Order today, and we'll include $50 in FREE discounts, good on any future purchase with NO minimum.***

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Winter arrives in North Carolina, causing outages in late January

Ice-laden trees leaning onto power lines were often the main culprit for the outages. Central EMC crews work to restore power to members.

After a warm beginning to winter, Mother Nature finally brought freezing precipitation to most of North Carolina in January in the form of Winter Storm Jonas. Snow, sleet and freezing rain began falling in the early morning hours of Friday, Jan. 22, and did not exit the state until late Saturday, Jan. 23.

At the storm's peak, NC Electric Cooperatives reported approximately 25,000 outages. Freezing rain caused the majority of the outages, 16,500, situated in the Sandhills region along the I-95 corridor and near the South Carolina border. Freezing rain, snow and sleet also caused outages in Central N.C. as the storm progressed through the state.

Dangerous road conditions, falling trees and limbs due to ice build up and downed power lines hampered restoration efforts. By 10 p.m. on Friday, Jan. 22, the outage count reached its peak at 25,000. Crews worked through the night to bring the number down to 12,600 by 6 a.m. on Saturday, with all the outages restored by Sunday morning, Jan. 24.

N.C. electric co-ops not affected by outages sent crews to their sister co-ops. The deployment of help is part of a mutual aid agreement shared among the state and nation's nearly 1,000 electric cooperatives to help one another in times of emergency.

Co-ops reported an "all hands on deck" approach to the restoration efforts, with every department either in the front lines of restoration or providing support for both the line workers and members on a 24-hour basis.

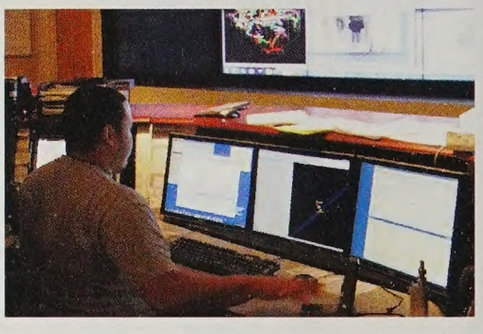
Pee Dee EMC (Wadesboro) had 5,960 members lose power across the co-op's seven-county territory during the two days. "Our crews had a difficult time reaching poles that needed repairing because of the amount of ice and snow, and then mud, that covered the area," explained Ashley Ratliff-Haynes, communications specialist for Pee Dee EMC. "Trees and limbs downed by ice caused the biggest problem, with 95 percent of the outages due to trees in some way."

Walter White, director of marketing and economic development for Lumbee River EMC (Red Springs), reported peak outages of 13,084 across all four counties the co-op serves. He credits the co-op's employees—line crews, dispatchers, engineers, warehouse workers and member services personnel—as well as the outside crews from Piedmont EMC (Hillsborough), Tideland EMC (Pantego), East Coast Electric and Buford Tree Service—for helping with restoration efforts.

At Central EMC (Sanford), approximately 9,500 outages occurred within 18 hours. "It certainly wasn't ideal conditions to avoid power outages. This storm brought ice accumulation, which spells disaster for power outages," reported James Taylor, communications specialist for Central EMC. "But our linemen and staff did an exceptional job, working nonstop throughout the weekend." Crews from Brunswick EMC (Supply), Lee Electrical Construction, Lewis Tree and New South provided much-needed support to Central EMC's crews. Carteret-Craven EC (Newport) crews were on standby for Central EMC, but not needed.

"When these types of storms happen, it's great to see the cooperative spirit at work—cooperatives and contractors from across the state banding together to do whatever it takes to get our communities back up and running. And the most important thing is that we were able to do it quickly, but safely, which is always the goal," said Taylor.

Cooperative members affected by the outage expressed thanks to co-ops and crews via phone calls to customer service as well as social media. At South River EMC (Dunn), approximately 5,000 members faced power outages. Through Facebook, the co-op constantly updated its members on outage locations, and the conditions the crews faced in restoration efforts. Members stayed positive and offered support. Comments included "great response on the outages, hard-working and dedicated employees." On Lumbee River EMC's Facebook page, one member thanked the linemen for their efforts, and for risking "your life and property to make sure we citizens are safe and warm."



The Lumbee River EMC dispatch center operated 24 hours a day, coordinating power restoration efforts with the line crews.

In a surprise presentation, Gov. Pat McCrory (right) presented Onslow County art instructor Beth Howard (left) and Ron McElheney (middle), former CEO of Jones-Onslow EMC in Jacksonville, with the coveted Order of the Long Leaf Pine in recognition of service to the state. Howard has won 21 Bright Ideas grants from Jones-Onslow EMC, funding learning projects that have reached more than 20,000 students. Photo credit: Lauri Crowder, Onslow County Schools.

Touchstone Energy Sports Camp scholarships: Apply today!

North Carolina's Touchstone Energy Cooperatives are awarding middle-school students full scholarships to attend basketball camp on college campuses this summer.

Young men can apply to attend the Roy Williams Basketball Camp June 18–22 at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, and young women can apply to attend the Wolfpack Women's Basketball Camp June 12–15 at NC State University in Raleigh.

Campers will stay in dorms and work directly with the coaches and current and former players at the overnight camps. Students must be in sixth, seventh or eighth grade during the 2016–2017 school year to be eligible to apply, and applications must be postmarked by March 31.

Statewide, more than 50 students will receive Touchstone Energy Sports Camp scholarships this year. For more information or to download the application, visit ncelectriccooperatives.com/community.

22 linemen advanced their education at Nash Community College

Nash Community College this year recognized 22 electric cooperative linemen for completing advanced education work in the college's Electric Lineman Technology program. The 22 men earned advanced certificates for completing 17 college-level credits.

The program includes courses in the classroom and outdoors on a specially-designed training field built by the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives. They learn skills such as overhead line construction, underground line construction and the National Electrical Safety Code. Beyond classes in line work and energy management, they can take courses toward an Associate Degree ranging from writing and math to critical thinking, computers and communication.

Since the program began in 1998, 17 co-op linemen have graduated with an Associate Degree. The community college program is supported entirely by the cooperatives but is also attended by linemen from Duke Energy and the municipal electric systems. In 2015, 331 students enrolled in the Electric Lineman Technology program.

Listed are co-op linemen who completed the work in 2015.

Advanced Certificate

Blue Ridge Electric
Jeffrey Evans
Eric Helton
Gregory Ward

Brunswick EMC
Rodney Babson
George Cartrette
Adam Faulk
Shannon Long

Lumbee River EMC
James Locklear

Pee Dee EMC
Brad Billingsley
Joseph McCormick
Phillip Morgan
Steven Preslar

Piedmont EMC
Joshua Austin
Andrew Dawson
Brian Rhew
Jeff Young

Pitt & Greene EMC
Joshua Holland
Gregory Johnson

Randolph EMC
Jarred Allred
Danny Lee

Roanoke Electric
James Elliott
Cliff Neathery

Try This!

Smart buys

How to choose efficient appliances

By TJ Kirk

It's never a good day when you realize you need to replace a large appliance in your home. However, when that unfortunate time comes, take a moment and consider what you will purchase—especially for appliances that haven't been replaced in a number of years, as the technology may have changed substantially.

Instead of rushing out to buy the same make and model of appliance you had, consider this an opportunity to assess the market and make a smart purchase that will save you money in the long run.

According to the Department of Energy, appliances account for about 13 percent of the average household's energy use. Clothes dryers, refrigerators/freezers, computers, microwaves, dishwashers and washing machines are the appliances that tend to use the most energy in a typical American home.

Operating costs

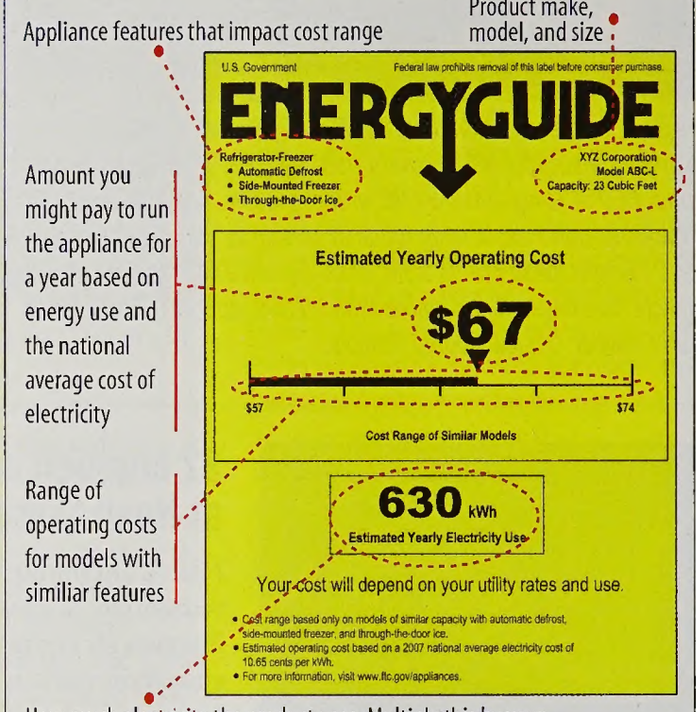
Every appliance you buy has an operating cost, which is the cost of the energy needed to power the appliance. To facilitate more informed comparison shopping, the federal government requires some appliances to have an Energy Guide label stating the approximate energy consumption and operating cost of the appliance. Appliances with an Energy Star label use 10 to 50 percent less energy than standard appliances and are generally more expensive than their standard counterparts. So, it's important to compare the lifetime costs of each (upfront cost + operating cost) to ensure that purchasing the efficient appliance is the best choice.

What size do you need?

In addition, make sure to consider size. Purchasing an appliance that is too large for your needs will lead to more energy being used. For example, laptops or small desktops (e.g., the Mac Mini) use only one-quarter of the energy of typical desktop PCs and have sufficient memory and processing speeds for many common applications. This same principle applies to refrigerators, air conditioners and more.

How to Use the EnergyGuide Label

Appliance manufacturers are federally required to provide an EnergyGuide label so consumers can compare energy use between different brands and models.


Appliance features that impact cost range
Product make, model, and size
U.S. Government
Federal law prohibits removal of this label before consumer purchase.
ENERGYGUIDE
Refrigerator-Freezer
• Automatic Defrost
• Side-Mounted Freezer
• Through-the-Door Ice
XYZ Corporation
Model ABC-L
Capacity: 23 Cubic Feet
Amount you might pay to run the appliance for a year based on energy use and the national average cost of electricity
Estimated Yearly Operating Cost
$67
$57
$74
Cost Range of Similar Models
Range of operating costs for models with similiar features
630 kWh
Estimated Yearly Electricity Use
Your cost will depend on your utility rates and use.
• Cost range based only on models of similar capacity with automatic defrost, side-mounted freezer, and through-the-door ice.
• Estimated operating cost based on a 2007 national average electricity cost of 10.65 cents per kWh.
• For more information, visit www.ftc.gov/appliances.
How much electricity the product uses. Multiply this by your local electricity rate for an idea of your actual operating cost

Source: Federal Trade Commission, ftc.gov/appliances

As you begin your search for a new appliance, check with your electric cooperative to see if it offers incentives for energy efficient appliances. You can also use the Energy Star website, energystar.gov, as an additional resource.

Dramatic advancements in the efficiency of many electric appliances now can provide the same level of end-user comfort with substantially less electric input. With a little research and forethought, you can save money over the life of your appliance without sacrificing any benefits. Happy shopping!

Thomas Kirk is a technical research analyst specializing in energy efficiency and renewable energy for the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

For more information on how to save energy, including a virtual house tour, go to TOGETHERWESAVE.COM

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Jacuzzi

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Carolina Country
garden GUIDE

Made for the shade

Japanese painted fern

Photos and text by L.A. Jackson

Looking for a dependable plant capable of lighting up shady spots in your spring and summer garden? Look no further than Japanese painted fern (Athyrium niponicum). This easy-to-grow, deer-resistant perennial sports bright, colorful fronds, which can be up to 18 inches long, in partial to fully shaded spots. Foliage tints are most intense in the spring, and, while they can fade slightly in summer's heat, their beauty cannot be denied.

Moist—not soggy—soil suits this Oriental import best. It can stand some drought, but will survive rather than thrive in arid conditions, so supplemental waterings when the rains don't come is advised. However, this plant doesn't have to be babied through the growing season. It is tough, and as long as moisture needs are met, the Japanese painted fern will even make a pleasing addition to shady container plantings and hanging baskets.

These fancy ferns don't require a lot of fertilizer. So, if you have the need to feed, use either an organic or time-release fertilizer at half the recommended rate of other perennials.

Although Japanese painted ferns will do well in a garden's more shadowy realms, don't treat them like botanical vampires. In fact, if they are situated in an area that receives a few hours of early morning sun, their colors tend to have more pop.

Japanese Painted Fern

As long as a Japanese painted fern has it made in the shade, especially in the afternoon when the sun is at its strongest, it can stand our summers. In addition, being rated for USDA Zones 3–8, this beauty is a reliably hardy perennial that can weather the worst of typical Carolina winters. Also, it spreads slowly by creeping rhizomes to form colony clumps that can be divided in the spring.

For many years, the selection 'Pictum' has been the prize catch for Japanese fern fanciers, and no wonder—this showoff has variegated green fronds heavily dusted with silver and supported on wine-red stems, making for a real tricolor treat.

Because 'Pictum' has been so popular, other new introductions have been developed, including the aptly named 'Ghost' and the equally pale-but-pretty 'Branford Beauty'. Also consider 'Ursula's Red', which shows off deep pink veins and a smoky green center that is flanked by silvery tips. And 'Burgundy Lace' is a real stunner with light green fronds heavily splashed by silver and purple stripes.

Garden to do's

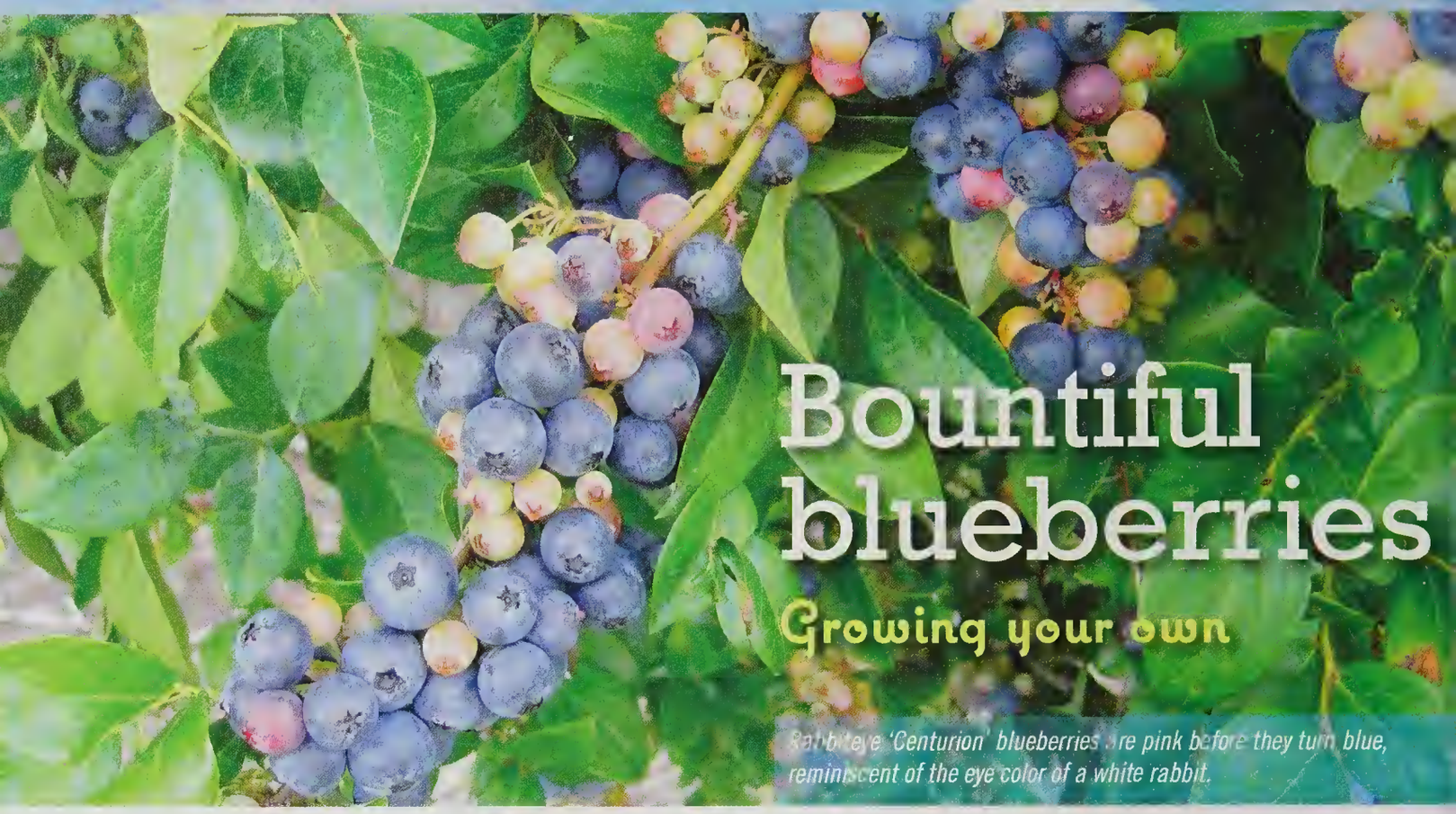
- Annual vegetable and flower beds should be rejuvenated by being tilled. While the dirt is being turned over, it is not a bad idea to mix in liberal amounts of compost, leaf mold or other decayed organic matter to add natural nutrients into the soil.
- If you are planning to till garden soil, grab a handful of dirt first and squeeze it. If it holds together in a tight ball, it is too wet, and if you turn the soil over in such condition, your first harvest of the season will be a bumper crop of dirt clods.
- Summer blooming woodies such as althea, buddleia, vitex, crepe myrtle and pomegranate can be pruned at the beginning of March to stimulate more flower production later in the growing season.
- Allow the foliage of spring-flowering bulbs to die back naturally so the plants efficiently store nutrients for the next growing season.
- Migratory birds should be returning soon, so welcome them back by cleaning old nests and debris out of bird houses and giving the bird bath a good scrubbing.

Tip of the Month

What color would you like your hydrangea's blooms to be? Many cultivars of the common French (also called bigleaf) hydrangea (Hydrangea macrophylla) are sensitive to soil pH, so in growing ground that is well limed to the point of becoming alkaline, their blossoms turn deep pink. In acidic soils or planting beds that have been treated with an acidic additive of sulfur or an aluminum sulfate solution, the flowers trend towards sky blue hues. Such shifty color changing will be made faster if a French hydrangea is grown in the confines of a large pot or planter.

French Hydrangea

L.A. Jackson is the former editor of Carolina Gardener Magazine. lajackson1@gmail.com



Bountiful blueberries

Growing your own

Rabbiteye 'Centurion' blueberries are pink before they turn blue, reminiscent of the eye color of a white rabbit.

By Carole Howell

Blueberries, one of nature's most powerful superfoods, could be within your reach, and right outside your back door. If you're not yet enjoying fat, fresh-picked blueberries warmed by the sun and from your own garden, you can start now.

Blueberries love North Carolina as much as we love them, and are a beautiful addition to your landscaping, particularly in the spring with their delicate white flowers and in the fall with their brilliant red foliage.

Once established, blueberry bushes need very little care, but they do need a proper start.

Site preparation

"If you've got a site a blueberry likes, you can't really grow a tomato plant or a vegetable garden," said Bill Cline, extension specialist for NC State University, "That's because while most plants prefer a neutral pH of around 7, blueberries love an acid soil, around a 4.5 pH."

Look for a well-drained area in full sun, and prepare a spot by mixing the native soil with a generous amount of acidifying organic matter, such as pine bark mulch, to form a raised bed. Plan on placing plants about 5 or 6 feet apart.

Selection

Once your site is prepared, you're ready to select your plants. "When I talk to folks pretty much anywhere in the state, I recommend the Rabbiteye species, because it works well in North Carolina's wide range of soil types," said Cline. Rabbiteye (Vaccinium ashei) types are so called because the berries are pink before they turn blue, reminiscent of the eye color of a white rabbit. They come with names like 'Premier,' 'Powderblue,' or 'Tifblue.' Plant more than one type for cross-pollination.

The number of plants you'll need, of course, will depend on how you plan to use the fruit. Cline recommends five or six plants for the average family. "Just remember that birds love blueberries too, so it's a good idea to plant with loss in mind."

Bare root plants should be planted in late winter or early spring, while container grown plants will do fine planting in spring or fall.

For new plants, cut back half to ⅔ of the height at the time of planting. For potted plants, spread the root mass before planting.

Discourage fruit?

Yes, at first. This is an important tip: Many novice growers don't know that you shouldn't allow your plants to bear fruit for at least two years. Remove the flower buds to allow the plant to put all of its energy into healthy growth.

"That's really hard for folks to do, because they'll buy a plant and see all those flowers and start counting those blueberries," said Cline. "But it will be really worth your effort to take the crop off with the idea that you have to grow a bush before you can have fruit. If you let them have too many berries at a young age, it will stunt or kill them."

Care and maintenance

If your blueberry bush is happy with its soil, it needs very little fertilizer, said Cline. What it really needs is water in a

Pluck your fresh blueberries by the gallon or purchase by the pint at farms. Find out where at ncfarmfresh.com.

Festival in June

June is North Carolina Blueberry month. Celebrate at the 13th Annual North Carolina Blueberry Festival, June 17–18, in downtown Burgaw. To learn more, ncblueberryfestival.com.

moist, well-aerated soil, especially when the plants are young or during long dry stretches.

Established plants should be pruned to prevent overfruiting, maintain size and to remove dead or diseased branches. Netting your plants before they ripen may help prevent loss from hungry birds. Blueberry netting is relatively inexpensive, lasts several seasons, and is available at garden stores.

With the right soil and location, attention to watering, and pruning as needed, growing blueberries may be one of the easiest things you do all summer. Your final, but delicious, challenge will be to figure out how to enjoy all of those blueberries? Have fun finding out!

Carolina Country contributing writer Carole Howell lives in Lincoln County and is a member of Rutherford EMC.

N.C. ranks high in production

Certain organically rich, acid, sand-based soils with a high water table around Bladen and surrounding counties provide an ideal place to grow blueberries commercially.

According to the USDA, the state's farmers produced more than 48 million pounds of blueberries in 2014, and North Carolina typically ranks sixth or seventh among all blueberry-producing states. Approximately 75 percent of the state's crop is sold fresh in the retail market, mostly in the Northeast. Frozen fruit is used year-round in products such as yogurt, syrups and jellies, baked goods, and juices.

Blueberry Drizzle

About 16 servings

Great over cheesecake, pancakes and even as a pork glaze.

- 2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries
- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup water
- 4 teaspoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons dark brown sugar

Bring the blueberries, orange juice, and lemon juice to a boil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the lemon zest and cinnamon; adjust heat to low setting.

Whisk together the water and cornstarch until there are no lumps. Stir the cornstarch mixture and brown sugar into the blueberry mixture until thickened. Allow to cool for 10 minutes and serve warm.

Blueberry Bounce Smoothies

Serves two

Enjoy the freshness and fiber of fruit with filling yogurt protein and very little sugar.

- 1 cup frozen blueberries
- 1 cup frozen strawberries, raspberries, or peaches
- 1 cup pineapple and orange juice blend
- 1 cup vanilla Greek yogurt
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 6 ice cubes

Using a blender, process fruits, juice, yogurt, and sugar until smooth. Add ice cubes, processing until ice is small enough to fit through a straw.

Blubarb Pie

Serves 8

- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup light brown sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup quick-cooking tapioca
- 3 cups diced rhubarb
- 3 cups blueberries
- Pastry dough for double-crust 9-inch pie

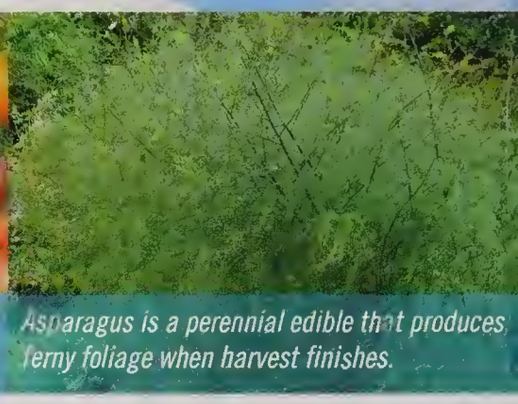
Preheat oven to 400°. Combine sugars, salt and tapioca in a large bowl and mix well. Add fruit and toss until coated.

Mound fruit mixture in 9-inch pie pan lined with pastry dough. Top with second crust, trimming so that top crust hangs ½ inch beyond rim. Tuck edge of top crust under bottom crust and crimp. Cut three small vents in the center of the crust.

Bake 20 minutes. Reduce temperature to 350° and bake an additional 25–30 minutes, until pie is golden and the juices are bubbling. Let cool 2 hours and then serve.

Rhubarb's edible stalks are best used in pies and jelly.

Given the retail cost and high yield, tomatoes are gardening's No. 1 high-payoff crop.



Asparagus is a perennial edible that produces ferny foliage when harvest finishes.

Getting the best bang for your buck

8 vegetables that yield ample payback

Photos and text by George Wiegel

If you're going to take a shot at growing your own dinner, start by picking the crops that offer the best return on your investment.

The best bets are crops that are both easy to grow and that produce high yields in limited space. Here are eight to try:

1. Tomatoes

They're not the easiest crops to grow in areas prone to blight diseases and high heat, but the payoff is huge. The taste and nutritional value of a home-grown tomato picked at peak ripeness is light years ahead of supermarket fare.

The cost of store-bought tomatoes coupled with the likely yield makes the tomato gardening's best investment.

Tomato plants are easy to start from seed, and the fruits are versatile for canning and freezing. Stake plants to save space.

2. Peppers

Both hot and sweet bell peppers are easy to grow. They thrive in warm weather.

Yields are good, store prices make the effort worth it, and peppers are nearly as versatile as tomatoes in the kitchen.

The biggest drawback: it takes weeks longer with more risk of loss if you're shooting for maximum-nutrition, fully ripe red/orange/yellow fruits. Green peppers are perfectly edible, but they haven't fully matured.

3. Cucumbers

Overcome the main problem of disease-spreading cucumber beetles, and you'll swim in fresh cucumbers for months. Turn cukes into pickles or relish and the value goes even higher.

Cucumbers are cheap and easy to start from seed planted directly in the garden.

Avoid pesticides, and spread out the harvest by planting new seeds every few weeks throughout summer. If wilt kills the older plants, young ones will then take over production.

4. Asparagus

One of the few perennial veggies, asparagus is planted by roots and can produce weeks' worth of nutritious shoots each year for decades. The long-term investment is high—especially given the cost of store-bought asparagus. Give asparagus its own patch so spreading shoots don't migrate into other crops.

5. Onions/Leeks/Shallots/Garlic

Just keep all these watered. They are among the cheapest, easiest-to-grow crops.

Onions aren't that expensive in stores, but are good keepers and versatile. Shallots and garlic fetch a good price, making them winners in any cost/benefit analysis.

6. Lettuce

Leaf types are easiest to grow and keep churning out fresh spring salads until heat turns them bitter. But new crops can be planted for fall in cool climates and even throughout winter in milder climates or with protection.

All lettuce is cheap to grow from direct-planted seed. The main adventure is keeping bunnies away.

7. Squash

Almost all summer squashes are tireless producers—that is, until either mildew or squash vine borers take them down. Both squash problems are stoppable, or use the same trick as with cucumbers—seed several times so you'll have a backup supply.

8. Rhubarb

Like asparagus, rhubarb is a perennial vegetable. You'll get years of strawberry/rhubarb pies and strawberry/rhubarb jelly from your expanding plants each season.

Other than rotting in wet clay (a no-no for any vegetable garden, anyway), rhubarb is low-care and long-lasting. And it's a bold, tropical-looking plant with its large leaves and reddish stalks.

Only the stalks are edible. The leaves are high in oxalic acid and should be cut off when harvesting.

George Weigel is a Pennsylvania-based horticulturist, garden consultant, author and newspaper garden columnist. His website is georgeweigel.net.

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Spring bulbs add the season's first color to this garden.

Grasses have grown and perennials bloom at different times throughout summer in the same garden.

A viburnum shows off fragrant white flowers in spring with green leaves, then the same plant develops a different but even showier look in fall with its dark-blue fruits and blood-red foliage.

Four-season interest

Giving your yard color throughout the year

Text and photos by George Wiegel

Sometimes it's not easy making a yard look good even in one season, much less all four.

The job is a little easier in spring to early summer when the majority of plants bloom and in moderate climates where seasonal differences aren't as harsh.

It gets much harder where seasons bring major changes, such as North Carolina's hot summers. It's hardest of all in cold-winter climates where the landscape can be buried under snow for months at a time.

Still, it's possible to milk the most out of any landscape anywhere with good planning.

The goal is to pick a diverse selection of plants that has something different going on at different times of the year.

Too often that doesn't happen because gardening tends to be viewed as a "spring thing." The result is that everyone shows up at the garden center as the weather warms in spring and ends up buying the same plants that happen to be peaking then.

A crape myrtle, for example, that will bloom beautifully by late summer, but that looks like a bare set of moose antlers at purchase time, has little chance next to an azalea that's blooming in full glory.

Buy your plants at the same time year after year, and it's no wonder that many yards end up as one-season wonders.

10 ways to do it

If you'd like to start spreading out your interest this season, here are some ways:

1. Add more variety

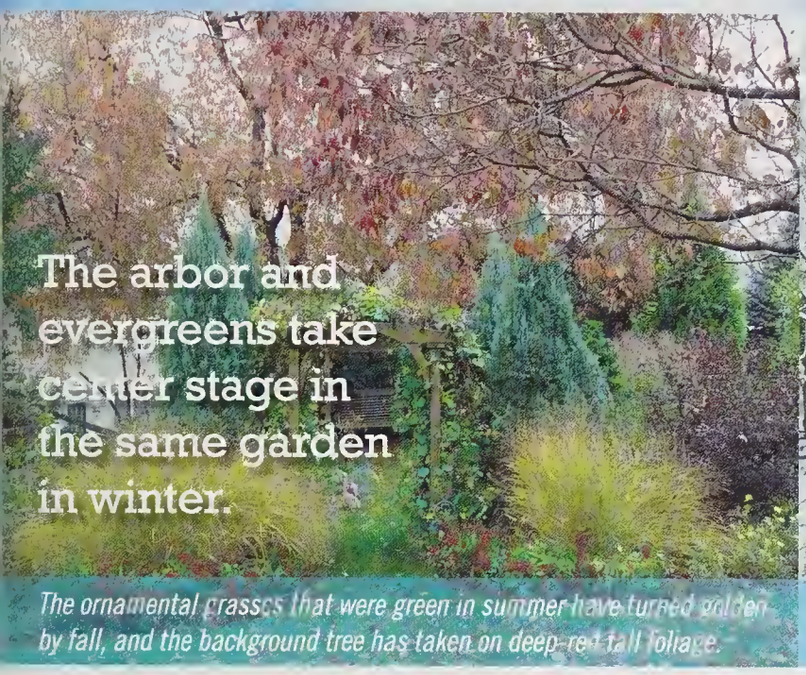
Plant more plants and different kinds of them. Even when planting a particular species, choose several different varieties of it to capitalize on their differences.

2. Evaluate seasonal weaknesses

Do homework into what plants are in prime form at what times. Then think about what each part of your yard looks like in each season, and seek out plants that will add interest to those boring gaps. Make notes during seasons to help identify the down times most in need of help.

3. Move beyond two-week wonders

Many of our favorite landscape plants happen to be one-dimensional plants that peak only for a few weeks out of



The ornamental grasses that were green in summer have turned golden by fall, and the background tree has taken on deep-red fall foliage.

The arbor and evergreens take center stage in the same garden in winter.

the whole year. They tend to be ones that have the good marketing sense to bloom when the most people are shopping, such as azaleas, rhododendrons, lilacs, peonies and forsythia.

4. Look for plants that do more than one thing

For example, viburnums are shrubs that flower fragrantly in spring, turn yellow or red in fall, then develop berry-sized fruits of red, gold, blue or black from fall into early winter. Some even hold their leaves in winter. Native ninebarks are shrubs that flower pinkish-white in late spring, then get BB-sized clusters of red seed-heads in early summer, then turn blood red in fall, then display peeling stems when bare over winter. Leaning toward plants with multi-season interest is especially helpful in smaller yards with limited space.

5. Color comes from leaves too

Pay attention to leaf color, especially in plants that hold foliage over winter.

Blooms are fleeting, but colorful leaves and needles add interest much longer … some of them all year long.

6. Shop in different seasons

Make it a point to go to the garden center whenever your yard is looking particularly barren.

7. Visit public gardens

They're great for getting ideas and seeing what's doing what at any given time. Take advantage of public gardens near you because the plants doing well there are likely to do well in the same climate and soils as your yard. Visit these in different seasons, too. Public gardens are especially helpful because plants are usually labeled.

8. Pay attention to what other people have planted

If you see plants nearby doing something interesting at a time when your yard is snoozing, find out what those plants are and add them to your list.

9. Don't overlook "hardscaping"

These are the paver walks, the stone walls, the arbors, the fences, the benches and the other non-plant features of the landscape. Not only do they add structure or "bones" to the look during the growing season, they're at their best in winter when many to most plants are off stage.

10. Add dedicated seasonal gardens

In addition to mixing plants with multi-season interest throughout the yard, consider planning whole gardens that peak in a particular season. Load those gardens with plants at their best in each assigned season, for example, a summer garden filled with annual flowers and summer bulbs and a fall garden highlighted with plants that get late-season berries and turn leaf color.

George Weigel is a Pennsylvania-based horticulturist, garden consultant, author and newspaper garden columnist. His website is georgeweigel.net.

Resource books

- "Beautiful at all Seasons: Southern Gardening and Beyond" by Elizabeth Lawrence (Duke University Press, paperback, $19.95, 2007)
- "Month-by-Month Gardening Carolinas" by Bob Polomski (Cool Springs Press, $24,99, paperback, 2006)
- "The Nonstop Color Garden" by Nellie Neal (Cool Springs Press, $24.99 paperback, 2014)

Gardening blunders

Avoid mistakes by learning from your 'foregardeners'

Text and photos by George Wiegel

Gardening is like any endeavor. The more you know, the more success you're likely to have. A good way to speed up the learning process is by taking advantage of the knowledge of those who have killed their plants before you.

Here are some important woes that our "foregardeners" would warn you about:

Not improving lousy soil

If you're blessed with reasonably good soil, just loosen and plant. But if you're starting with "soil" that's more of a sand pile, clay pit, quarry-in-waiting or compacted subsoil left behind by home construction, plan on some remediation.

One school of thought advises rototilling or deeply digging the ground to at least 10 or 12 inches deep, then working about 2 inches of compost, rotted leaves or similar organic matter into it.

A second school of thought advises topping the landscape-bed-to-be with about 12 inches of wood chips and then waiting at least six weeks for decomposition to start. Then the chips can be pulled back to plant and move among the plants as mulch.

You only need to do either of these once—before planting. From then on, just keep a 2- to 3-inch layer of organic matter over the surface and let the earthworms and microbes be your "soil improvers."

Planting too closely

This includes planting plants too closely to one another as well as too closely to the house.

Crowding sets you up for a jungle look within a few years, sets the stage for unnecessary pruning, and makes plants more prone to disease.

Determine the mature width of your new plant and space according to that—not its current size. A good rule of thumb: Add mature widths together and divide by two, then plant no closer than that. *(Example: 8-foot holly beside a 4-foot spirea. 8+4=12, divide by 2, equals 6-foot minimum spacing.)*

To space from houses, simply divide the mature width in half and plant no closer than that. *(Example: An 8-foot holly should go no closer than 4 feet from the house.)*

Mulching madness

You can overdo it or underdo it with mulch, which is the coarse wood or organic matter used on soil surfaces to discourage weeds and retain soil moisture.

Too much mulch can cause the same problems as planting too deeply. Too little won't stop weeds or retain moisture very well.

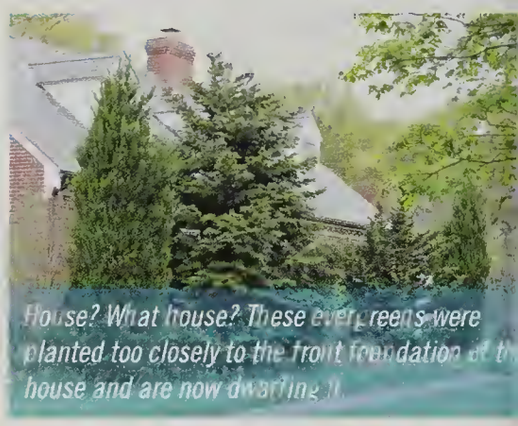
Especially be careful not to pack mulch up against the stems and trunks of plants. That can rot the stems and bark and possibly kill the plants.

Two to three inches of organic mulch (i.e. bark mulch, chopped leaves, pine straw, shredded hardwood) is ideal around trees and shrubs. One to 2 inches is fine around flowers.

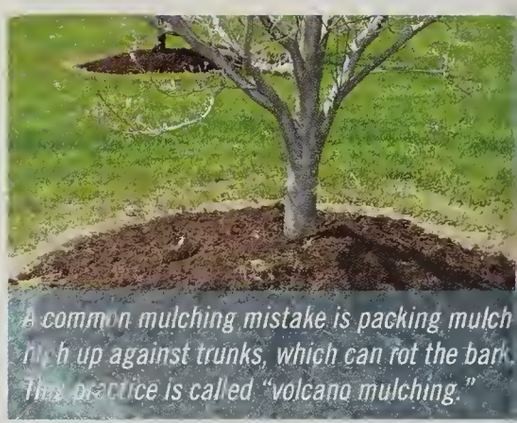
Unsuitable sites

Plants have their own particular site preferences, especially when it comes to light and soil moisture. Check with trusted local experts, such as Extension educators and local garden centers, as to best sites.

As for plants that are struggling, don't be afraid to move them—the sooner the better. Many "green-thumb" gardeners will tell you they've moved every plant in their yard a minimum of three times before they got it right.



House? What house? These evergreens were planted too closely to the front foundation of the house and are now dwarfing it.



A common mulching mistake is packing mulch high up against trunks, which can rot the bark. This practice is called "volcano mulching."

The future owners of this new home may or may not realize that this compacted shale soil is lurking below.

George Weigel is a Pennsylvania-based horticulturist, garden consultant, author and newspaper garden columnist. His website is georgeweigel.net.

By the numbers

Best positioning for items in your home

Whether it's arranging your couch and television for optimal viewing, or making sure towel bars are within reach, knowing a few key numbers can help you determine ideal places for well-used items. Calculating placement helps create spaces that look great and are easy to use.

Kitchen

Comprised of your three main work areas—the stovetop, refrigerator and sink—the common kitchen triangle should provide enough space to move around, but not be so large that cooking is difficult. Keep these areas between four and nine feet apart for the most efficient use of space. Ensure all other appliances are in proportion to one another, with complementary ones grouped together. For example, minimize the mess from wet dishes by placing the sink and dishwasher a maximum of 36 inches apart.

Most countertops are 36 inches high, while microwaves are typically no higher than 54 inches for easy reach. Choose the correct faucet height so it's in proportion with other fixtures and works with your layout.

You don't want a too-tall faucet that blocks your window, or one so low it's difficult to fill sizable containers or pitchers. Moen is among manufacturers that offers a lower-profile spout for installations near a window or on an island. You want faucets that provide ample room to fill large pots, reduce splashing and improve rinsing in and around the sink.

Living room

Here are tips to help ensure your living room furnishings are located for maximum relaxation.

- Position the sofa and coffee table 18 inches apart to provide plenty of leg room.
- Keep the table and sofa heights within a few inches of each other to make it easy to grab the remote or a tasty beverage.

- Arrange seating a maximum of 10 feet apart to inspire conversation.
- Avoid eye strain by positioning your television carefully. The larger your television is, the more distance you should place between the screen and your couch. A good rule of thumb is 2¾ inches of space for every inch of diagonal screen size for an HD plasma, LED or LCD television. However, the critical factor here is your comfort—if you feel claustrophobic or have to twist your head to see your favorite movie moments, rearrange spacing to your satisfaction.

Bathroom

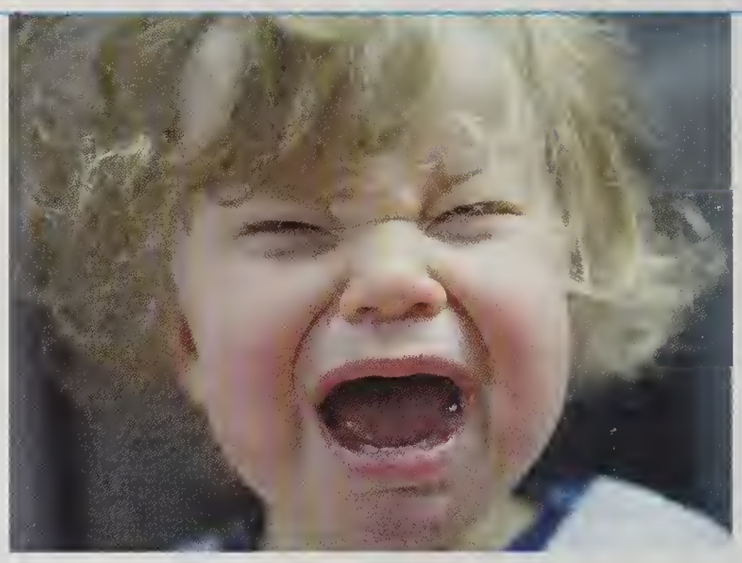
Functionality is key for grooming. Start by making certain the layout provides proper clearance for any doors, including cabinetry and shower stalls, and aim for at least 30 inches of space between the three major areas—tub or shower stall, sink and toilet. Toilets should range between 17 and 19 inches in height from floor to seat, with at least 18 inches of elbow room on the sides. And make sure the shower is roomy, too. Shower stalls should be at least 36 inches by 36 inches, with showerheads placed at a comfortable level for family members.

Similar to kitchen countertops, vanities with sinks should be about 36 inches high, with accompanying lighting at eye level to provide proper light for shaving or makeup application. Avoid dripping hands by hanging towel bars in a spot that's easy to reach, ideally right near the sink.

— Home Improvement Time

Terrible tantrums

5 parent mistakes that make them worse



One minute your toddler is giggling with delight and in the next, he or she is having an uncontrollable meltdown and won't listen to reason. As a caregiver, you feel embarrassed and upset. What do you do?

"It's easy to become overwhelmed when dealing with tantrums," says Dr. Tom Reimers, child psychologist and author of "Help! There's a Toddler in the House." "Fortunately, this common behavioral problem can often be corrected if you avoid common mistakes and take positive action."

Reimers notes the top five most common caregiver mistakes when kids have tantrums:

1. Ignoring tantrum precursors

Tantrums often feel like they come out of nowhere. While some are unavoidable, others can be diverted by paying attention to your child's specific cues. You may notice your child whining, fidgeting, teasing and ignoring you. These are common clues that a meltdown may be coming. If you see these cues, try taking a break from whatever you're doing or diverting your child's attention to a new activity.

2. Starting to count down

A common way to handle tantrums is to count down; stating that if the behavior doesn't stop by the count of three, the child is going to be in trouble. The problem is that this threat doesn't correct the behavior in a manner that a small child can understand and it often leads to a power struggle.

Courtesy of Brandpoint

A good approach is to walk away or resist reacting to the tantrum. Remember, your child is acting out of frustration, and when she or he is small, it's a difficult emotion to master. You must model the behavior you expect in public and at home. Once emotions have leveled, you'll have a better opportunity for discussing expectations.

3. Rewarding bad behavior

Tantrums can happen at the most inconvenient times. To get your child to act differently quickly, you beg him to stop by offering a treat or a sticker. Unfortunately, this sends a message to your child that bad behavior is rewarded.

Instead, focus on good behavior. Praising the times when she listens, follows directions and uses his or her manners reinforces the good. You may opt for an occasional sticker or treat as a reward if you'd like, but a "good job" and high-five from Mom or Dad is often enough to make tots grin from ear to ear.

4. Being unprepared with activities

A long trip to the grocery store or another errand is often unavoidable. However, children have short attention spans and need things to keep them occupied, so plan ahead. Bring along activities such as a new library book, a small toy car, a flashlight, stickers or coloring book long enough for you to complete your errand and keep your sanity.

5. Forgetting the tantrum after it's over

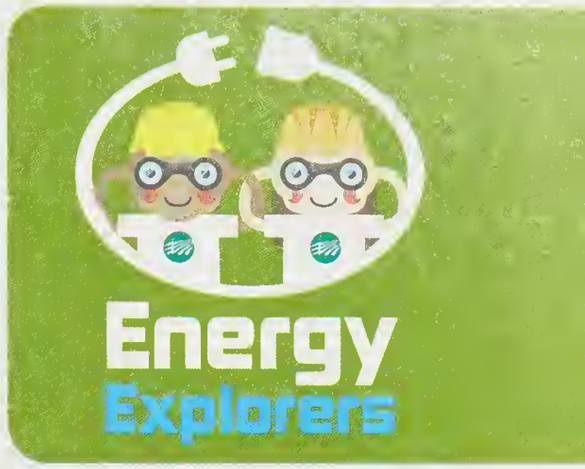
Once one has passed, it's tempting to move on. However, a better strategy once things have calmed down is to talk with your child directly without distractions, and state clearly that tantrum behavior is unacceptable. Then help your child learn age-appropriate coping mechanisms, like taking a deep breath and counting to 10 or hugging himself or herself tightly.

— Brandpoint

Advice emails

Reimers contributes to the Boys Town Toddler email series that provides parents advice on how to handle different situations. For free eNewsletters, visit boystown.org to sign up.

Efficiency Word Search



Reducing energy use is good for the environment, and by being energy efficient, you can help your parents save on their monthly electric bill! Find the words associated with energy efficiency in the word search below.

Circle all words associated with efficiency. The hidden words appear straight across, backwards, up and down, and diagonally. Use the word bank below as a guide.

WORD BANK

reduce	recycle
light switch	energy use
appliances	conservation
led bulb	thermostat

R	Y	F	T	T	I	C	U	Z	U	N	I	W	Q	L
Q	E	K	T	A	V	O	U	Z	B	C	Q	V	I	T
S	D	D	O	I	T	N	C	Y	R	K	N	G	X	E
H	F	I	U	V	O	S	P	F	M	S	H	Y	B	S
V	W	J	X	C	M	E	O	S	W	T	S	L	I	U
G	Z	I	U	H	E	R	Y	M	S	K	U	X	K	Y
Q	S	H	L	X	W	V	H	W	R	B	K	L	D	G
C	J	Q	P	O	R	A	I	X	D	E	O	V	Q	R
W	D	O	E	L	G	T	D	E	W	K	H	R	J	E
E	V	K	E	A	C	I	L	P	J	U	P	T	V	N
J	C	D	B	H	B	O	A	O	K	M	P	Q	Z	E
P	X	Y	S	E	C	N	A	I	L	P	P	A	P	H
L	W	T	L	P	U	T	G	T	R	I	C	A	W	C
D	V	X	V	R	J	B	I	M	L	S	B	J	O	C
X	F	R	E	C	Y	C	L	E	H	J	Y	Y	V	U

To see the answer key, send an e-mail message with Explorers in the subject line: **editor@carolinacountry.com**

America's Electric Cooperatives

Millennials and finances

Investing now for a brighter future

The majority of Americans say retirement investing is a priority, but more than half consider Social Security a top-three source for funding retirement, and 40 percent of millennials expect Social Security, along with 401(k)s and pensions, to fund their golden years, according to Capital One Investing's Financial Freedom Survey.

"With the future of Social Security uncertain, all Americans, and millennials in particular, should be proactively planning for their financial futures," said Yvette Butler, president of Capital One Investing. "There are consequences to sitting on the sidelines, most importantly a smaller nest egg in the long term."

The survey found 93 percent of millennials say distrust of the markets, lack of knowledge, little understanding of pricing and costs, and general complexities make them feel less confident about investing. Butler offers several ideas that may help younger investors establish a financial plan they can stick to.

Start early

The earlier you start planning and investing, the better. Have an emergency fund saved first (three months of living expenses is generally considered the bare minimum to have on hand). After you have set that fund aside, you may want to consistently contribute to a diversified retirement account to try to maximize your long-term gains. Even small amounts invested today can add up over time. Look for tools and brokerage firms that enable you to invest a set dollar amount and buy fractional shares of stocks, ETFs and mutual funds.

Get educated

From stocks and bonds to mutual funds, ETFs, IRAs and 401(k)s, there are a lot of strategies and vehicles out there. It may seem overwhelming at first. In fact, according to the survey, more than half of investors of all ages say their lack of knowledge and experience in investing hinders them from feeling confident about taking action. Exploring free financial resources and educational tools can help you sort out the facts and learn about tried and true investing principles.

Ask for help

A trusted professional can offer unbiased advice, and may help you develop an investing strategy you can follow and adjust.

Consider online accounts

An online investing account is easy to open and doesn't require a lot of cash to get started. Also, online investing and mobile apps give you increased on-the-go flexibility. Low-cost portfolio building tools that take into account your investment horizon and risk tolerance can also help develop a strategy that works for you.

When it comes to establishing a financial plan, stay motivated by determining clear goals. And don't forget to pat yourself on the back as you reach various milestones! Remember, the work you do today should pay off in years to come.

— StatePoint

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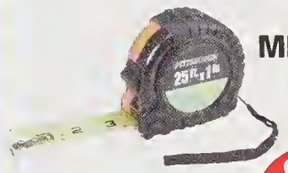

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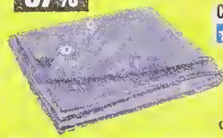

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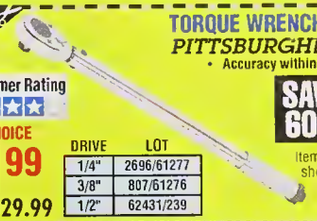

Customer Rating

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DRIVE	LOT
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Item 239 shown

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Primary Election Voter Guide

Brought to you by Carolina Country and North Carolina's Electric Cooperatives

Education is a cooperative principle, and North Carolina's electric cooperatives are committed to keeping their members informed about important issues.

One of this year's biggest issues, facing not only cooperative members, but all Americans, is the presidential election. On March 15, North Carolinians will have an opportunity to let their voices be heard when they vote in the primary election to select who they want to represent their party in the fall election.

To assist you in making a more informed decision, North Carolina's electric cooperatives invited every candidate appearing on either the Democratic or Republican primary election ballot in North Carolina to share his or her view on energy issues with cooperative members.

Those candidates who responded are featured on page 27 as well as in our online voter guide at carolinacountry.com/vote. Every candidate still on the ballot who submitted a response is currently included, and responses are unedited. The online voter guide will be updated as responses from more candidates are received.

North Carolina's electric cooperatives are not endorsing any of the candidates; this site simply provides information without commentary or conjecture to help you make informed decisions about your presidential candidates based on their views of energy issues.

Q: *Decades ago, electric cooperatives were established across this country to improve rural communities by providing electricity to areas without it. Now, rural America faces new challenges including a transforming economy, aging infrastructure, and the need for high-quality broadband access to open up new avenues for rural business, education and health care. As rural America and the electric industry evolve, what is your vision for the industry and how would your administration address these challenges?*

The Candidates

North Carolina's electric cooperatives invited every active candidate appearing on either the Democratic or Republican primary election ballot in North Carolina to share his or her view on energy issues with cooperative members.

Democratic

Hillary Clinton
hillaryclinton.com

Rocky De La Fuente
rocky2016.com

Bernie Sanders
berniesanders.com

Republican

Jeb Bush
jeb2016.com

Ben Carson
bencarson.com

Chris Christie
chrischristie.com

Ted Cruz
tedcruz.org

Carly Fiorina
carlyforpresident.com

Jim Gilmore
gilmoreforamerica.com

John R. Kasich
johnkasich.com

Marco Rubio
marcorubio.com

Donald J. Trump
donaldjtrump.com

Last update: 2/10/16

Voter Information

Schedule

March 3:	One-stop early voting begins
March 12:	One-stop early voting ends
March 15:	Election Day

Early voting

One-stop voting, commonly referred to as early voting, has grown in popularity with each election. One-stop sites allow a wider variety of times, dates and even locations for people to vote because you can vote at any one-stop location in your home county. For a list of sites in your county and their hours of operation, check out enr.ncsbe.gov/OS_Sites.

Opening and closing times

Polls will be open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Election Day. Early voting days and times will vary by county.

Poll locations

If you decide to vote on Election Day, make sure you head to the correct precinct. Unlike early voting, you can only vote at your assigned precinct on Election Day. You can look up your voter information at enr.ncsbe.gov/voter_search_public, which will provide you with your polling place and address, district numbers and sample ballot.

New voter ID rules

Whether you vote early or on Election Day, make sure you remember to bring a form of photo identification. You can use your North Carolina driver's license, NC DMV ID card, US passport, US military ID card, US veterans ID card or tribal enrollment card for identification purposes. For more information on these and other acceptable forms of identification, visit voterid.nc.gov.

Still have questions?

If you have any questions on anything related to voting, simply visit the State Board of Elections at ncsbe.gov or call your home county's board of elections office.

Jeb Bush, R
jeb2016.com

As millions of North Carolina's electric cooperative customers know, energy is not just a sector of our economy. It is also an input into every other economic sector. Cheaper, more reliable energy benefits American families in multiple ways such as more jobs, higher wages, and smaller electricity bills. In short, it means more money in people's pockets, allowing them more freedom to make more choices for themselves and their children.

Currently Washington wrongly imposes its will on how North Carolina's electric cooperatives and their customers generate, distribute and use energy. For instance, a new US Environmental Protection Agency rule oversteps state authority by mandating that North Carolina's electric generators further reduce greenhouse gases more than surrounding states. This is despite the fact North Carolina has been a leader in reducing greenhouse gas emissions—achieving a 20 percent cut since 2005. Worse, the rule will increase electricity bills, in some areas by double digits, and threaten the reliability of the electricity grid. No wonder North Carolina along with 26 other states is suing the federal government to overturn this overbearing rule.

Such federal overregulation of energy markets hurts not only the energy sector, but every rural consumer of energy in the state. We need to free North Carolina of such barriers and let citizens decide what is right for them. That is one important way we achieve, and maintain, jobs in the state that, in turn, will allow us to pay for new infrastructure and even better protection of the environment. That is why I am the only candidate to release a comprehensive set of proposals to reform Washington, control federal regulations and return authority back to states.

This is how you help rural communities thrive. I believe America is on the verge of its greatest century and I'm ready to lead that resurgence.

Hillary Clinton, D
hillaryclinton.com

America's rural communities lie at the heart of what makes this country great. Yet, in spite of their critical role in our economy, unemployment, and poverty are too high in these areas, while access to health care, affordable education, and broadband is limited.

I am committed to strengthening rural communities' economic engines because they provide the foundation for the entire country's success. By expanding access to equity capital, we can spur investment to power the small and medium sized businesses that drive the rural economy. I am also committed to creating a $25 billion national infrastructure bank and investing an additional $250 billion in public infrastructure projects to help improve the country's rural transportation, water, and broadband to meet the demands of the modern economy.

North Carolina's agriculture remains a critical cornerstone of a vibrant rural economy. I will support the next generation of farmers by doubling funding for programs that provide education, mentoring, and technical assistance to aspiring farmers. Additionally, I want to expand food hubs, farmers markets, and encourage direct sales to local schools, hospitals, retailers, and wholesalers to build a strong local and regional food system to support farmers.

Rural America is an energy leader, providing clean electricity and transportation fuels to the rest of the country, reducing our dependence on foreign oil, and making the air we breathe cleaner and safer. I know that clean fuels and clean electricity will grow our economy, lower our energy bills, combat climate change, and make America the clean energy superpower of the 21st Century.

I also believe that you should be able to live, work, and raise a family anywhere you choose which is why I'm committed to expanding quality health care, a good education, and providing support to boost the small businesses that provide the backbone of North Carolina's rural economy.

Marco Rubio, R
marcorubio.com

America is blessed with abundant energy resources. Thanks to new technology and innovation, we are poised to become the world's energy superpower even as our emissions are declining. Our nation's member-owned rural electric cooperatives play a critical role in delivering affordable energy to families and businesses that are creating jobs and economic growth.

In order for rural electric cooperatives to continue providing affordable energy, we must limit the power of unelected regulators. As President, I am committed to minimizing the massive regulatory burden placed on our nation's rural electric cooperatives by doing the following:

- Reversing the Clean Power Plan. The EPA's carbon mandates will make energy less affordable, for no meaningful impact on the global climate.
- Reversing "Waters of the US". The harmful rule undermines the role of states to protect their water resources and significantly broadens EPA's regulatory power.
- Instituting a National Regulatory Budget that will hold regulators accountable by limiting what federal regulations can cost per year. Establishing a Regulatory Budget will help stop EPA's aggressive agenda that is increasing energy costs for working families. We must hold the EPA accountable for its out-of-control regulatory agenda, including specific mandates that impact member-owned rural electric co-ops.
- Appointing individuals that understand the challenges and opportunities facing energy providers in rural America. We must put an end to Washington bureaucrats that stifle the innovation and productivity of our rural electrical cooperatives.

Responses from other candidates will be posted online when they have been received.

TOP DOG

NORTH CAROLINA'S TALE OF THE COYOTE

by Carole Howell

In 2011, NCSU graduate student Morgan Elfelt, right, and Ryan Williamson of USDA Wildlife Services, humanely trapped and radio-collared coyotes at Ft. Bragg. They weighed and measured the coyotes, collected samples, determined sex and age, and released them. The tracking collars revealed a surprising fact about these fascinating animals: coyotes roam far and wide, sometimes for hundreds of miles.

If you live in the country like we do, it's not uncommon to hear the shrill cry of a soaring hawk, the cackle of a chatty crow, or the chip-chipping of an angry squirrel. It's also becoming more common to pick up the yip-howl of a coyote or two at dawn or when day fades to dusk.

Whether we like it or not, coyotes seem to love North Carolina as much as we do. While some were brought into the state by fox hunters in the 1980s, natural ingress was the primary source. Coyotes are now well established in all 100 counties.

"For years, people accused us of releasing coyotes," said Ken Knight, Piedmont Region supervisor of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission. "But that was certainly not the case. If you look at where North Carolina is geographically, there were coyotes to the south of us, to the west of us, to the north of us, and we were just one of the last places that they got to.

"The blame is on the coyotes. They got here on their own," he says.

By nature, coyotes range far and wide. An NCSU study at Ft. Bragg, conducted by Morgan Elfelt, now a wildlife research assistant at Natural Resources Research Institute, found that some coyotes captured and fitted with tracking collars roamed a surprising 400 miles or more.

"And while we had three that roamed, we also had some that never left the base. To me, that's a fascinating story that our collars are telling us," says Elfelt.

In other words, the coyote you spot trotting across your property or raiding your trash may be a homebody or just passing through.

Coyotes live like hobos, simply going where food and opportunities are plentiful, and easily adapt to cities and suburbs. They really don't care what they eat, and dine on grasshoppers, clover, fruit, garden vegetables, and lots of rabbits, mice and squirrels. They also kill and eat small house pets, young farm animals and deer, and that has given the coyote an especially bad rap.

NUISANCE OR NATURE'S WAY?

It's hard to imagine a story in which Little Red Riding Hood is approached in the woods by a coyote, but coyotes are taking on the role that wolves once played in balancing our ecosystem.

"Originally we had wolves and mountain lions as predators for deer and things had a kind of way of balancing out before people got involved and killed all the wolves and mountain lions," says Knight.

Knight added that even before we had coyotes in North Carolina, small livestock and deer were found dead, and the culprit was often wild dogs or pet dogs running loose. Today, most people just blame the coyotes, even though dogs are still often to blame.

Hunters aren't fond of them because they're under the impression that they're causing deer populations to decline, and there's certainly some research to back that belief.

Colter Chitwood, Ph.D. post-doctoral fellow at the Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences Department of the University of Missouri in Columbia, conducted and published research on coyotes and how they impact deer populations. Of the 28 deer observed in the Ft. Bragg study, four pregnant deer were found dead with signs consistent with coyote attack behavior.

"It's not unusual for coyotes to kill heavily pregnant deer and newborn or unborn fawns when the does are heavy, slow and at their most vulnerable," says Chitwood. "What we need to recognize here is that because this was occurring at Ft. Bragg, where the deer population is at a fairly low density, it does appear that coyotes can affect the deer population."

Adds Knight: "It varies greatly on the concentration of the deer, the deer habitat, and how much cover there is where the does go to have their fawns. They're good in that they do kill some deer, but hunters and vehicles kill many more deer than coyotes. In some cases, they're certainly helping to control the population in places where people don't hunt and where coyotes and cars are about the only way the deer are getting a little bit of control."

COYOTE CONTROL

Coyotes sometimes range hundreds of acres as their territory, and have been tracked traveling hundreds of miles. Because coyotes are extremely transient, managing them is not exactly a black and white or local issue. The coyote you hear or see today may not be the same one you see two weeks from now.

The best way to manage a houseguest who has overstayed his welcome is to remove the temptation to stay. Removing a coyote's food sources should be the first thing you do.

"Coyotes will become bold if there's any food at all for the taking," says Knight. "Fallen fruit, pet food left outside, and unsecured trash will draw them. Of course, those are the same things that attract rats, raccoons, skunks and bears, so it's just common sense to keep things out of the reach of unwelcome wildlife."

Other things homeowners can do include keeping brushy areas cut back, installing coyote-proof fencing for unsupervised pets, yelling and making noise to scare them away, and educating your neighbors about the pitfalls of feeding coyotes. While they're not known to be a risk to humans unless cornered or sick, the few coyote bites reported each year are usually related to coyotes intentionally fed by humans.

"Certain breeds of dogs do a good job of protecting livestock," says Knight, who says that some people successfully use guard animals such as donkeys, mules or llamas.

If you already have a problem with a coyote, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission recommends starting with non-lethal methods. The next step would be to search its website, ncwildlife.org, under "Coexisting with Wildlife." The information under this tab can help you find a wildlife damage control agent, a private individual who charges for his or her services, or a licensed trapper.

"In North Carolina, it is legal to hunt coyotes any time, day or night," says Knight. "You can also use lights and electronic callers, which you can't use for animals such as foxes or bobcats." The only exceptions are Dare, Hyde, Beaufort, Tyrrell and Washington counties where hunting coyotes is strictly regulated due to an experimental red wolf reintroduction project. The Registration Digest of the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission has the specifics, including how to report.

If you encounter a coyote or any wild animal showing abnormal behavior such as unnatural tameness or unprovoked aggression, call your local animal control service or law enforcement agency and keep yourself and your pets well away until help arrives.

Coyotes may look a little scraggly, and they're sometimes a nuisance, but they play their part in keeping our ecosystem in balance. We can learn to coexist. Like them or loathe them, coyotes are in North Carolina to stay.

Carolina Country contributing writer Carole Howell lives in Lincoln County and is a member of Rutherford EMC.

FIVE COYOTE FAST FACTS

1. *Our own eastern coyotes are a hybrid of western coyotes, wolves and domestic dogs. Their kinship with wolves makes them slightly larger than their western counterparts, weighing in at between 25 and 50 pounds.*
2. *Coyotes are omnivores and will eat practically anything edible. Examinations of coyote scat have revealed insects, mammals, fruit, birds, snails, frogs and even food wrappers.*
3. *Coyotes appear often in Native American mythology and are often depicted as a savvy, clever trickster.*
4. *In the wild, they live from 10 to 14 years, and mark their territory with urine, just like domestic dogs.*
5. *Wile E. Coyote could have saved all the money he spent on anvils and the ridiculous products he purchased from Acme. The fastest recorded speed for an actual roadrunner is 26 mph, while coyotes have a top speed of over 40 mph.*

Cabinet holds memories and hard work

This cabinet belonged to my Mama. As long as I can remember, it and another one just like it sat alongside a Hoosier cabinet in our kitchen in Gastonia. After she died in 1975, children and grandchildren were given various pieces of furniture. This cabinet has passed through several homes over the years. It even once served as a display cupboard for a business in Chapel Hill! Then one day, my daughter in Charlotte called and asked me if I wanted it. I was thrilled to have it. My husband, Wayne, grows a fine garden and I try to can as much as possible. I just know Mama would be happy to know her cabinet now holds all that our hard work has produced.

Dot Huntsinger Ballard, Marion, Rutherford EMC

Dirt and lessons learned

I can still see myself sitting between a row of butterbeans carefully rubbing dirt on every inch of my legs, arms and any other body parts that weren't already covered. My mother was chopping weeds further down the row.

I can also remember why. I wanted to get as dirty as possible so that when I got home and took a bath, I could get as clean as possible. I guess you could call it a science experiment. How does the feeling of complete filth compare to the feeling of squeaky clean? Which knee holds the most soil, the right knee or the left? I can still feel the coolness of the dirt that I applied to my legs. This childhood game required nothing but dirt, a child's body, and later, a bathtub, water and a lot of soap. It taught the appreciation of nature, concentration and good old hard work.

At the same time, I saw another lesson demonstrated. It was a lesson in patience from my mother chopping further down the bean row. Already tired from battling weeds, she now had to drag home a child covered in dirt. I never remember being scolded or punished for getting so dirty. I only remember the love and kindness that it took to get me clean again. Blessed with maternal wisdom, my mother knew that "my dirt experiment" was just as important to me as a thriving garden was to her.

Lou Ann Ostadi, Wake Forest, Blue Ridge EMC

Easter picnic with family

My memories of Easter Sunday take me back to my childhood days when Easter Sunday began with my family and me going to church early in the morning for a beautiful sunrise service. Later that same morning, we would come home and delve into an Easter basket filled with our favorite candies, and of course, a milk chocolate bunny.

I would always have a brand-new dress, hat and shoes to wear to Sunday school and church services later that day. One of my favorite things we did on Easter Sunday was to go to the local park by the Cape Fear River and have a wonderful picnic lunch with my family, grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles.

After eating ham, potato salad and other goodies, all of the kids would hunt for hidden Easter eggs that we had colored the previous day. We would then count the number of eggs each of us had found. The day ended with us playing games like hide-and-seek at the park and then going home to eat the rest of the goodies from our Easter baskets.

Debbie Radford, Stedman, South River EMC

Your Memories

Guidelines:

- We'll pay $50 for those we publish in the magazine. We'll pay $50 for those we publish in the magazine.
- Approximately 200 words.
- Digital photos must be at least 600kb or 1200 by 800 pixels.
- Only one entry per household per month.
- Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want yours returned.
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- Include your name, mailing address and the name of your electric cooperative. Also, your phone number or email address in case of questions.
- **Online:** carolinacountry.com/contact
  Email ("Memories" in subject line.): iremember@carolinacountry.com
  Or by U.S. mail: I Remember, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616

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Fancy Finch

As I was walking past the spring trees to go to my college class, I saw this purple finch chirping. I was mesmerized by its beauty.

Julian Smyre, Statesville, EnergyUnited

The Photo of the Month comes from those that scored an honorable mention from the judges in our 2016 photo contest ("Carolina Country Scenes," February 2016). See even more at the Photo of the Week on our website **carolinacountry.com**.

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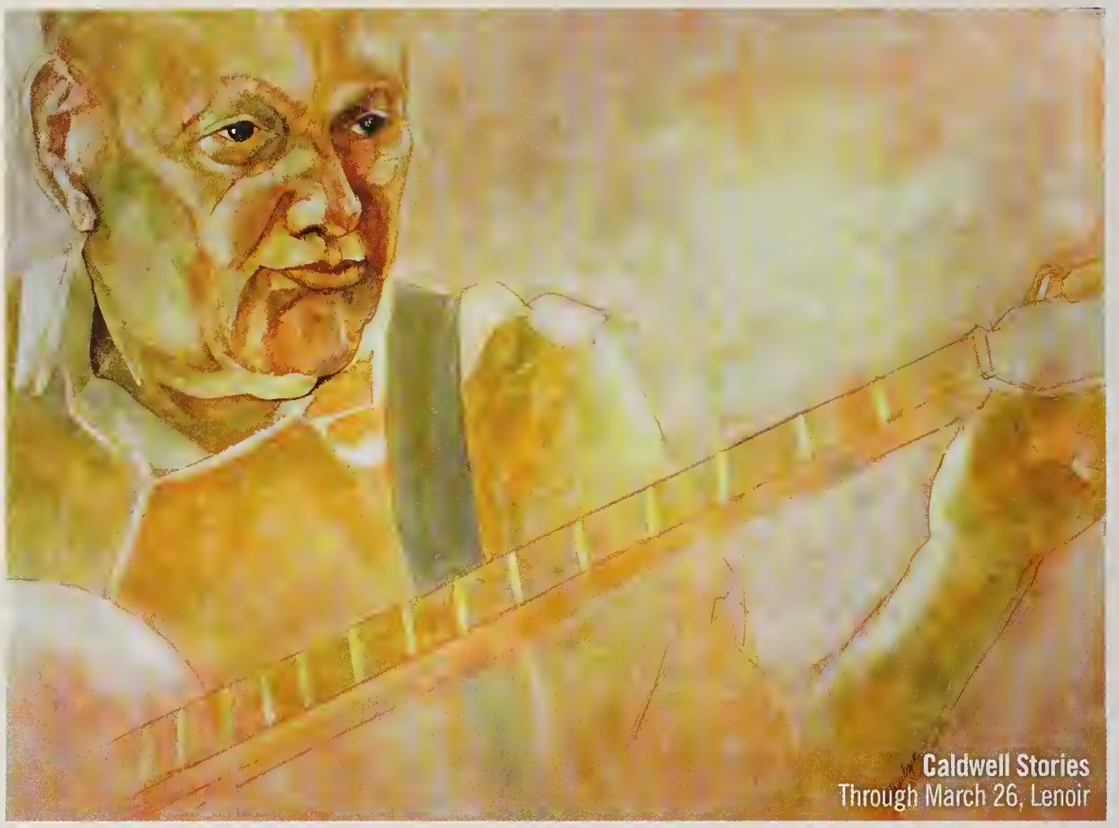
March Events



Caldwell Stories
Through March 26, Lenoir

Mountains

Two On Tap
Dancing
March 11, West Jefferson
336-846-2787
ashecountyarts.org

Spring Fest Craft Show
March 19, Burnsville
828-208-6975
burnsvilletowncenter.com

Laurelyn Dossett Duo
March 19, West Jefferson
336-846-2787
ashecountyarts.org

Home Movie Day
Sharing family films
March 19, Blowing Rock
828-295-9099
blowingrockmuseum.org

A Baroque Adventure
Mini Matinee series
March 20, Blowing Rock
828-295-9099
blowingrockmuseum.org

Easter Sunrise Service
March 27, Chimney Rock State Park
828-625-9611
chimneyrockpark.com

ONGOING

Woody's Original Mountain Music
March 4–25, Marion
828-290-2377

Mountain Gateway Music Jam
March 6–20, Old Fort
828-290-2377
mountaingatewaymuseum.org

Caldwell Stories
Abstract art, artist's renderings of residents
Through March 26, Lenoir
828-754-2486
caldwellarts.com

Piedmont

Backyard Habitats
Creating butterfly/pollinator gardens
March 3, Monroe
704-283-3822
mastergardenersunioncountync.org

Star Fiddler's Convention
March 5, Biscoe
910-428-9218

The Boxcars Concert
March 5, Troy
704-985-6987
bluegrassintroy.com

Camellia Show
March 5–6, Fayetteville
910-323-0111
fayettevillecamelliaclub.org

40 Under 40
Semi-formal event
March 11, Fayetteville
910-486-3507
fayobserver.com

Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver
Scholarship concert
March 11, Statesville
704-881-2532
hbcstatesville.org

Just Spoolin' Around Quilt Show
March 11–12, Charlotte
704-256-9039
charlottequiltersguild.org

Highfalls Old-Time Fiddlers' Convention
March 12, Robbins
910-464-3600

The First Jump
Book signing
March 12, Fayetteville
910-643-2778

Malpass Brothers Concert
March 12, Roxboro
336-597-1709
www.personcounty.net

Big Top Out The Box Circus
Show focuses on crowd engagement
March 18, Fayetteville
910-438-4100
crowncomplexnc.com

Spring Farm Show
Antique equipment, craft demos
March 18–19, Lillington
910-984-4317
safeclubinc.org

There are more than 200 farmers markets in North Carolina, and some stay open year-round. For one near you, visit **ncfarmfresh.com/farmmarkets.asp**

Doyle Lawson & Quicksilver
March 11, Statesville

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

In case something changes after Carolina Country goes to press, check information from the contact listed.

Sandy Ridge School Bluegrass Show
March 19, Sandy Ridge
336-932-5664
richintraditionbluegrass.com

Methodist University Jazz Festival
March 19, Fayetteville
910-630-7100
methodist.edu/mu-events

Laurelyn Dossett Duo
March 19, West Jefferson

Ballet Classics
March 20, Fayetteville
910-485-4965
ncstateballet.com

Fourth Friday
Celebration of the arts
March 25, Fayetteville
910-323-1776
theartscouncil.com

Concerts With Brian Free & Assurance
And Karen Peck & New River
March 26, Albemarle
704-986-3666
stanlyciviccenter.com

ONGOING

Art by Dan Wilson
March 1–31, Roxboro
336-597-1709
www.personcounty.net

Downrange: Voices From Homefront
Play about deployment and families
March 3–20, Fayetteville
910-323-4234
cfrt.org

Coast

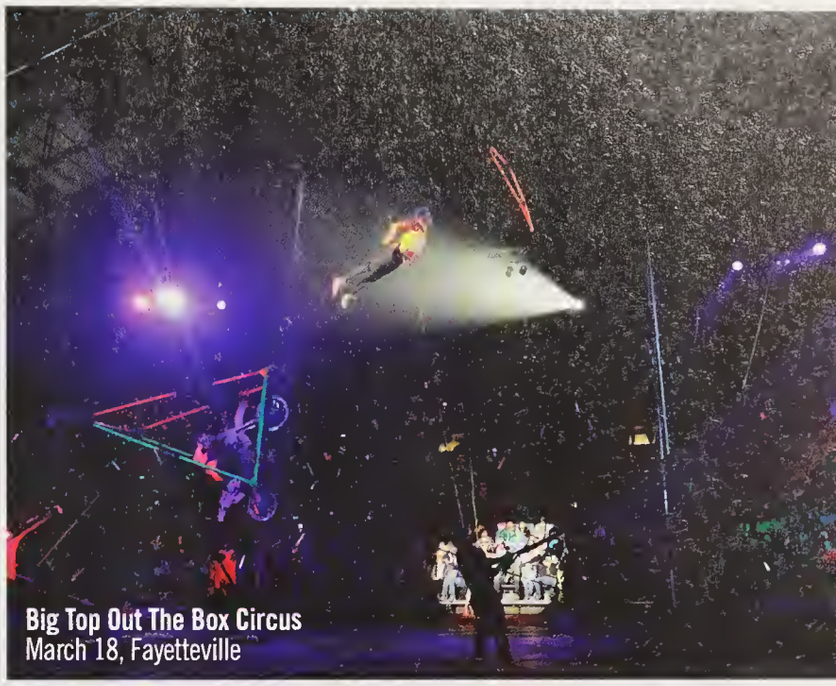
Down East Talent Search
March 4, Greenville
252-329-4200
ecu.edu

It Happened in The Park
Musical variety show
March 4–6, Oriental
252-249-0140

Homefest
March 5, Greenville
252-321-7671
visitgreenvillenc.com

Della Mae
Female combo
March 11, Oriental
252-617-2125
pamlicomusic.org

Wildlife Expo
March 18–20, Wilmington



Big Top Out The Box Circus
March 18, Fayetteville

The Giver
Play based on Lois Lowry's book
March 18, Greenville
252-329-4200
ecu.edu

Wildlife Expo
Boats, demos, art, decoys
March 18–20, Wilmington
910-795-0292
capefearwildlifeexpo.com

Southern Farm Days
Tractor games, hit and miss engines
March 19–20, Lake Waccamaw
910-754-6124
southernfarmdays.com

Easter At The Old Bridge
March 26, Sunset Beach
910-579-9021
oldbridgepreservationsociety.org

ONGOING

Uptown Artwalk
First Friday monthly, Greenville
252-561-8400
greenville.com

ArtWalk
First Friday monthly, Elizabeth City
252-338-6455
artsaoa.com

Carolina Compass Policy

- We list events in the magazine as space allows and may edit as needed. We list more events on carolinacountry.com in the Carolina Adventures section.
- All submissions must be made on carolinacountry.com in Carolina Adventures/Submit an Event. Deadlines are posted there, too. ***(No email or U.S. Mail.)***
- Public venue events only. *(No business-hosted events.)*
- Limit 3 events per venue per month in the magazine. More posted online.
- For accuracy, ongoing events must be submitted monthly.
- Public contact required: website, email or phone number.

Listing Deadlines:
For May: March 25
For June: April 25

Submit Listings Online:
Visit carolinacountry.com and click "Carolina Adventures" to add your event to the magazine and/or our website.

CAROLINA COUNTRY adventures

Spring herb festivals help kick off gardening season

Text and photos by Leah Chester-Davis

Herb festivals across the state help usher in the gardening season each year. Herbs are among the easiest plants to grow. Whether you have a small space and room for only a few containers, or you wish to add herbs to your landscape, festivals offer the chance to meet growers, learn about growing requirements, get a look at a variety of plants, and enjoy all kinds of tips, advice and inspiration.

Andy Reed, Asheville Herb Festival manager, says that to get the most of a festival experience, talk with the growers. Ask questions and find out what varieties best suit your needs. Start with herbs you like to cook with and don't fret if something you try doesn't work; try a different plant next year.

Deborah Crumpton, owner of Running Pine Herb Farm in Reidsville and an EnergyUnited member, sells at local farmers markets, the Asheville Herb Festival and the Cabarrus Herb Festival. She offers these tips when visiting a festival:

- Go with a plan. Have an idea of what your favorite herbs are and what you want to try. Take a list with you.
- Know the growing requirements in your region or ask the grower what works best in your area. For example, if you're visiting the Asheville market but live in the Piedmont inquire about any special considerations for your area.
- Bring some type of large basket or container to carry plants and other purchases. Some people bring wagons.
- Prep your growing area now so that when you get your herbs home you will have a place for them. Keep in mind that most herbs like at least 6 hours of sun each day.
- Make sure your growing area has good drainage; herbs don't like wet feet. If you have clay soil, add amendments.

Leah Chester-Davis has her own business, Chester-Davis Communications (chesterdavis.com), specializing in food, farm and lifestyle brands and organizations.

Here are a few 2016 festivals to consider:

Poplar Grove Plantation
24th Annual Herb & Garden Fair
April 2–3
Poplar Grove Plantation, Wilmington
910-686-9518
poplargrove.org/festivals/herb-garden-fair

The area's largest garden event features plants, classes and activities on gardening. In addition, perennials, annuals, hanging baskets, shrubs, native plants, vegetable starts and houseplants are also available along with garden art, accessories, herbal products, artisan crafts and local food.

10th Annual Cabarrus Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Spring Herb & Plant Festival
April 16
Piedmont Farmers Market, Concord
704-920-3310
cabarrus.ces.ncsu.edu/spotlight/2015-spring-plant-and-herb-festival

More than 85 vendors showcase herbs, other plants and garden accessories. Master Gardener volunteers will be on hand to answer gardening questions.

27th Annual Asheville Spring Herb Festival
April 29–May 1
Western North Carolina Farmers Market, Asheville
828-253-1691
ashevilleherbfestival.com

Considered by many growers and festival visitors to be the "granddaddy of them all," the Asheville Herb Festival, one of the largest in the country, features hundreds of herb varieties, herbal medicine, gourmet cooking herbs, organic seeds, heirloom vegetable starts and gardening advice from Buncombe County Master Gardeners.

WHERE IN CAROLINA COUNTRY IS THIS?

This is a Carolina Country scene in Touchstone Energy territory. If you know where it is, send your answer by March 6 with your name, address and the name of your electric cooperative.

Online: carolinacountry.com

By email: where@carolinacountry.com

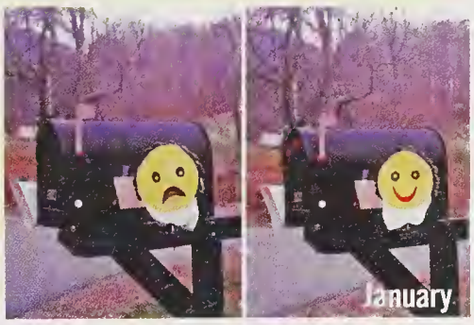
Or by mail: Where in Carolina Country?
P.O. Box 27306
Raleigh, NC 27611

Multiple entries from the same person will be disqualified.

The winner, chosen at random and announced in our April issue, will receive $25. To see the answer before you get your April magazine, go to "Where Is This?" on our website carolinacountry.com.

February

The February scene for "Where Is This?" stumped everyone. It's a rare occurrence when Carolina Country does not receive any correct answers, but it happened with this scene. Justin Scroggs of Clyde submitted the image of his Dad's mailbox on Brown Cove Road in Clyde. Scroggs explained that the two-sided figure can share his Dad's mood: "Some days you are the diamond, some days you are the coal." The Scroggs are members of Haywood EMC.



ADVERTISEMENT

Loose Saggy Neck Skin – Can Any Cream Cure Turkey Neck?

DEAR DORRIS: I'm a woman who is 64 years young who suffers from really loose skin under my chin and on my lower neck.

I hate the term, but my grandkids say I have "turkey neck" and frankly, I've had enough of it! I have tried some creams designed to help tighten and firm that loose, saggy skin, but they did not work. Is there any cream out there that Might help my loose neck skin?

Turkey Neck, Raleigh, NC

DEAR TURKEY-NECK: In fact, there is a very potent cream on the market that is designed to firm, tighten and invigorate skin cells on the neck area. It is called the **Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream.**

This cream contains an instant-effect ingredient that aims to tighten the skin naturally, as well as deep-moisturizing ingredients aiming to firm the skin and make it more supple. Amazingly, the Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream also has Stem Cells taken from Malus Domesticus, a special apple from Switzerland.

These apple stem cells target your skin's aging cells, and strive to bring back their youthful firmness, and elasticity. As an alternative to the scary surgeries or face lifts that many people resort to, this cream has the potential to deliver a big punch to the loose saggy skin of the neck. **The Dermagist Neck Restoration Cream is available online at Dermagist.com** or you can order or learn more by **calling toll-free, 888-771-5355.** Oh, I almost forgot... I was given a promo code when I placed my order that gave me 10% off. The code was **"NCN18".** It's worth a try to see if it still works.

You can reach Charles Joyner by email: joyner@carolinacountry.com

WINTER TO SPRING

WINTER

— — — — —

— — — —

— — —

— — —

— — — —

— — — — —

— — — — —

SPRING

To change WINTER to SPRING you must drop a letter, change a letter, or add a letter to spell a new word in each step. Your answer may be different from mine.

MATCH BOXES

M	A	T	C	H
B	O	X	E	S

6 0 1 5

3

x M

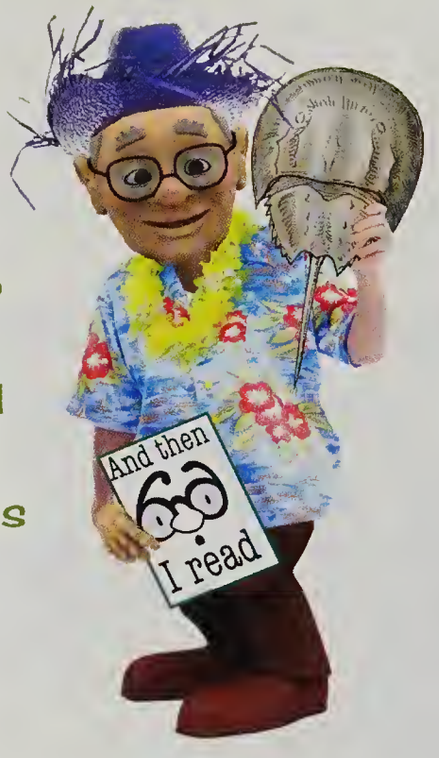
0 1 3 4 5 6 8 means
I S M N E R H

Solve this multiplication problem and write your answer on the top line. Then use the code key to find hidden words in the problem and its answer.

UNSCRAMBL*IT*

In the early 1800s, steamboat travel between Fayetteville and Wilmington along the Cape Fear River was a voyage of _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _!
v l e o s d v

Use the capital letters in the code key below to fill in the blanks above.
A D I S X Y means
s o l v e d



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Of all sad words of pen or tongue,
the saddest (or at least among
the saddest are)–I quake, I quail
to read, "Your check is in the mail."
which means, too often, to my sorrow,
"We plan to mail that check tomorrow."

I've learned (Fina'le), to my credit:
"Don't spend that money 'til you get it.

–CGJ

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By Hannah McKenzie

Finding quality HVAC companies

Q: The central HVAC system at my home is 10 years old. I've never had an HVAC service contract and I expect to need repairs as the system gets older. How do I know I'm hiring a reputable HVAC company to do maintenance, repairs and eventually install a new comfortable and energy efficient system when I need one?

A: It can be daunting to find an HVAC company that you trust. The vast majority of HVAC professionals are honest and hardworking but, just like the caliber of food varies from Subway to a steakhouse, HVAC professionals have different levels of knowledge, skills and pay structures. It is important to find an HVAC company that fits your specific needs and desires.

Hiring an HVAC company for yearly routine maintenance not only gives you an opportunity to establish a relationship with them long before a new system is discussed, but also fosters a good life for your current system.

Routine maintenance is best done in late spring or early fall, as temperatures are not at extremes and HVAC companies are less busy. Maintenance may include: cleaning the coils and ensuring proper air flow, and checking the duct system's condition, mechanical operations of system fan(s) and refrigerant charge. By performing maintenance before the HVAC unit breaks, you will know that most components are okay and it is only a matter of diagnosing and fixing the specific problem. If you wait until the unit no longer operates properly, you may be at the mercy of the technician's diagnostic skills.

To find an HVAC company, ask friends and family who have had recent HVAC work done. Also, check with the Better Business Bureau (BBB) and read online reviews through social media or other group sources. Your local electric cooperative may also provide HVAC maintenance or replacement programs that include rebates, preferred contractors and homeowner comments/ratings.

HVAC professionals have different levels of knowledge and skills. It's important to find a company that fits your needs and wishes.

If possible, find an HVAC company that specializes in your brand of equipment. A good technician can work on anything but a company that specializes in a particular brand is often able to purchase the parts cheaper than a company that does not sell that brand.

Request a technician who has attended a technical college or has been certified by a nationally recognized training provider such as North American Technician Excellence (NATE). Ask for his or her name and ID number, then contact NATE to verify that technician's certification, knowledge and training.

Feeling confident about your HVAC company can ensure your HVAC system is getting appropriate TLC throughout its lifespan and especially during its later years. Next month, we will explore steps and considerations for HVAC repairs.

For more information about NATE, visit hvacradvice.com or call (877) 420-6283.

Special thanks to Chris Reynolds, HVAC technician and licensed HVAC contractor with Advanced Energy, for his information. Chris has six NATE certifications, an HVAC license and years of field experience.

Hannah McKenzie is a residential building science consultant for Advanced Energy in Raleigh.

Vacation Rental

BEACH HOUSE, N. Myrtle Beach, SC. 4BR/2B, sleeps 12–14. 828-320-5173. Details at flyinghigh333.com or bnagel1936@gmail.com

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Miscellaneous

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WINTER
TWINE
TWIN
TIN
TIP
TRIP
STRIP
GRIPS
SPRING

UNSCRAMBLIT

SIX DAYS

MATCH BOXES

RISE x M = SHINE
6015 x 3 = 18045

Orzo Vegetable Salad

- ½ cup uncooked orzo pasta
- 3 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 1 cup marinated quartered artichoke hearts, chopped
- 1 cup coarsely chopped fresh spinach
- 2 green onions, chopped
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 tablespoon capers, drained

Dressing:

- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 4 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh tarragon or 1 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon peel
- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Cook the orzo according to the package directions.

Meanwhile, in a large bowl, combine the tomatoes, artichokes, spinach, onions, cheese and capers. In a small bowl, whisk the dressing ingredients.

Drain orzo and rinse in cold water. Add to vegetable mixture. Pour dressing over salad; toss to coat. Chill until serving.

Yield: 6 servings

Cheeseburger Macaroni Skillet

- 1 pound lean ground beef (90% lean)
- 8 ounces uncooked whole wheat elbow macaroni
- 3 cups reduced-sodium beef broth
- ¾ cup fat-free milk
- 3 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 teaspoons Montreal steak seasoning
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- 1 cup (4 ounces) shredded, reduced-fat cheddar cheese
- Minced chives

In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat 6–8 minutes or until it is no longer pink, breaking beef into crumbles.

Stir in the macaroni, broth, milk, ketchup, steak seasoning, mustard and onion powder; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, 10–15 minutes or until macaroni is tender. Stir in cheese until melted. Sprinkle with chives.

Yield: 6 servings

Creamy Pineapple Salad

- 1 package (9 ounces) cream cheese, softened
- 1 can (14 ounces) sweetened condensed milk
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 2 cans (20 ounces) pineapple tidbits, drained
- 1½ cups multicolored miniature marshmallows, divided
- 1 carton (8 ounces) frozen whipped topping, thawed
- ½ cup chopped nuts
- ⅓ cup maraschino cherries, chopped

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, milk and lemon juice until smooth. Add the pineapple and 1 cup marshmallows; fold in the whipped topping. Sprinkle with nuts, cherries and the remaining marshmallows. Refrigerate leftovers.

Yield: 16 servings

From Your Kitchen

Jalapeño Poppers

- 8 fresh jalapeños, halved and deseeded
- ½ cup grated cheddar cheese
- ¼ cup pimientos
- 8 pieces of bacon, sliced in half

Preheat oven to 400. Slice and deseed the jalapeños. Fill each jalapeño half with shredded cheddar and top with diced pimientos. Wrap each jalapeño half in half a slice of bacon. Bake for 20 minutes until bacon is crispy.

This recipe comes from Elisabeth Lewis of Durham

Send Us Your Recipes

Contributors whose recipes are published will receive $25. We retain reprint rights for all submissions. Recipes submitted are not necessarily entirely original. Include your name, address, phone number (for questions), and the name of your electric cooperative. Mail to: Carolina Country Kitchen, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611 or E-mail to: Jenny.Lloyd@carolinacountry.com.

Find more than 500 recipes at carolinacountry.com

Recipes here are by Taste of Home magazine,unless otherwise indicated. For a sample copy, send $2 to Taste of Home, Suite 4321, PO Box 990, Greendale WI 53129-0990. Visit the Web page at tasteofhome.com

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